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# MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

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A

# DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING IN BOSTON,

MAY 25, 1858.

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BY REV. SETH SWEETSER,

Pastor of the Central Church, Worcester, Ms.

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A. J. Cossen
June 13, 1868

# DISCOURSE.

It is a cherished tradition amongst the Russians, that their nation will one day conquer the world. This favored belief, acting like an inspiration, impresses peasant and nomade, noble and chieftain; invests war with the power to fill out in the future the brilliant vision of Muscovite glory, and binds to the chariot-wheels of military leaders, the thousands who dare the horrors and carnage of the battle-field, to share in the coming triumph. Every ignoble serf who dies, every hero glittering in the insignia of military honor, who sheds his blood, lays himself a willing sacrifice upon his country's altar, for his country's glory.

There is a nobler prospect for the inspiration of the people of God, not resting upon mythical tradition, but the sure word of promise, that Christ's kingdom shall possess the whole earth. It is God's eternal purpose, amply declared; it should be the faith of believers; not a cold, speculative, dreamy fancy; not a distant and glittering vision, charming and dazzling without electrifying; but a vitalizing, pregnant idea, arousing energy and giving birth to endeavor; pervading all the sentiments of the mind and stirring the practical principles to fervent action; animating, like the passionate love of martyrs, the whole soul to that pitch of zeal which flames out and still ascends, in the midst of the fiercest perils and heaviest oppressions of the Redeemer's service.

When the church is possessed with this idea, as by a charm, an inspiration, a profound conviction, it will lay broad foundations, build steadily for distant realizations, toil and sacrifice to-day for a thousand years to come; each generation bringing its huge and polished stones to lay in the imperishable walls of the vast temple; the fathers departing, and the sons entering into their labors; and fathers and sons, in long succession, alike rejoicing in the anticipated glory of the set time, when the lofty dome shall crown the finished work, and the shout of grace, grace unto it, shall go up from all nations.

For in religion, as in other things, a dominant idea is no better than a hallucination, if it does not enforce and sustain practical processes, reaching on towards possible results. The vague and shadowy notions of an immediate coming millennium, sweeping like a vision through Christendom, have been as powerless as they were transient, because they only flitted like phosphorescent exhalations before the excited imagination, instead of presenting the motives to an enlightened Christian judgment, which call into activity substantial Christian energy.

The grand consummation which is to crown the warfare of the church, prolonged through the centuries of time, is an actual condition of society; a state of living men; righteousness wrought out in visible beauty; godliness exercised in conscious peace; the tabernacle of God with men; because the offensiveness of sin, which made intercourse impossible, is succeeded by the holiness which makes God delight in us, and we in him. This is the triumph of the kingdom of God; as yet very distant, and only to be reached by slow and painful steps, by labors, toils and sufferings, endured in faith and patience, by those who have not yet obtained the promises, but see them afar off.

So magnificent an enterprise, and one withal so beneficent, as this of bringing the world into subjection to Christ, insomuch as it depends upon men, claims and deserves the highest, holiest, and best directed human energies. More gigantic than the ambitious conceptions of Alexander or Napoleon, it would paralyze instead of stimulating, were it not addressed to faith, which expands the possible to the measure of God's omnipotence. 'Go preach my gospel.' 'Lo, I am with you.' Faith unites the human and divine. The result attends their combination; never their separation.

There is, then, a practical side, a plain, business-like aspect, to this divinely appointed work, which claims our consideration. We do not shut God out, when we carefully and wisely construct the machinery with which to accomplish his will, any more than we deny God's providence and bounty, when we erect a lightning-rod, or turn the furrow with the plough. All the world's progress is in the wise and energetic exercise and application of powers and faculties bestowed of God for that end. Agriculture, commerce, art, science, the whole round and array of industrial effort, developing resources, enlarging comforts, smoothing and adorning the rough surface of things about us, are so many processes, whereby God, by us, is perfecting his own purposes, and accomplishing his plan of bringing all the forces of nature, and all the intellect of the race, to their fullest service and highest action for his glory. And there is just this resemblance to be kept in view, that the advancement of religion on the human side, depends upon a parallel and substantially similar combination of energy, wisdom, and executive power. It is no irreverence to say, that as science, practical skill, business enterprise, and generous adventures in the use of money and of men, will lead to the solution of the great problem of the ocean telegraph, by which the mighty pulsations of the heaving heart of the British empire shall be counted in Boston, and every new sensation felt there shall, on the instant, thrill through our electric system, as if we were no longer twain but one flesh; so must calculation, profound thought, forecast, sagacious activity, various means, and the generous appropriation of men and money, precede and lead on to the solution of a higher problem,—that glorious unity when all mankind shall be of one heart and one mind, the eternal fellowship in Christ binding, in sympathetic friendship, the rent and fragmentary families of earth.

As the profound movements of the natural world depend upon simple principles, so this momentous spiritual enterprise rests upon a simple agency. Preaching is the divinely appointed means, through which human endeavor operates. This is the central and controlling agency, imparting tone and life over the whole area of religious activity. It is the permanent institution of the church. The pulpit is the throne of moral power, and there resides the sceptre which auspiciously sways the thoughts and passions of men. Other means are beneficent, though subordinate; this is indispensable and vitalizing, like the great magnetic centre which guides the oscillations, and gives the directive force to the innumerable needles which, on the sea and on the land, in calm and in storm, turn their points always to the same star.

The various co-operative labor of the laity is, in its sphere, invaluable; it is one of the sources of Protestant healthfulness, safety and energy. The multiform products of the press, books, tracts, periodicals, convey knowledge and largely expand religious intelligence. But something more is needed than knowledge, for the renovation and regulation of the world. The thought which is to be the life of the soul in its service of God, must come to it in the magic vehicle of the human voice; in words magnetized in the heart from which they issue, so as to move the hearts which receive them. It must be divine thought, intelligently conceived, intelligently uttered, intelligently accepted; for religion is the action of a finite mind controlled by divine ideas. Separate religion from intelligence, and it sinks into formalism, or evaporates in mischievous enthusiasm. The ministry, learned, devoted, sanctified, trained to broad views, to profound knowledge, and governed by deep convictions, is the hope and defence of a firm, consistent and efficient piety. With that, the whole machine works safely; without it, the balance-wheel is gone.

In one sense, every disciple is a preacher; but in the higher and stricter sense, they only are preachers who are skilled to present, illustrate and enforce divine truth. "God forbid," says Lord Bacon, "that every man that can take unto himself boldness to speak an hour together in a church, upon a text, should be admitted for a preacher, though he mean ever so well." That an efficient ministry must be an adequately educated ministry, is a principle too long cherished in our churches to require argument. The tree of our prosperity was set by the rivers of waters, and its leaf has not withered. The kindred streams of religion and good learning, have flowed around us, fertilizing and refreshing the genial soil which has sustained so noble a growth. We need not be proud, but we should be grateful for that list of worthies which adorns New England history; men whose piety was made efficient by the generous culture which they consecrated to its service; whose devotion to truth, learning and liberty, entitle them to be held in unfading remembrance, in the state, as well as in the church. We have gained too much, we enjoy too much now, in the intelligent, practical Christianity of the day, in our freedom from the sullenness of dogmatism on the one hand, and the wildness of a disordered fanaticism on the other; in the efficiency of a well instructed laity, and in the admirable confidence and co-operation in every good work which subsists between pastors and people, hastily to abandon a doctrine which reason and a happy experience so amply justify.

It being then admitted, that preachers should be well educated, specifically furnished for the momentous responsibilities of the sacred office, it is a fair question, whether the church is bound by any imperative obligation, to see that well-qualified ministers are provided. If the practical business of converting the world lies upon the Christian conscience and heart, then it also lies upon the Christian conscience and heart, as far as in their power, to furnish the requisite means. If the first necessity is men, then the church must furnish men. If the men cannot successfully do the work, until they are educated, then the church must see that they are educated. If the general arrangements for education are ample to a certain point, and specific arrangements are needed beyond that point, then the church is under obligation, by its own plans and endeavors, to supplement and complete the general plans existing in the community.

If the established system of schools, academies, colleges and seminaries, furnishes ample privileges for a generous culture in all the necessary departments of useful knowledge, both sacred and profane, so that students looking forward to any profession, have equal opportunities to gain the desired discipline, one necessity in the education of the ministry is already met. And if existing institutions furnish instruction at so low a rate, or with such charitable reductions, as to bring the course within the means of the poorest, then the responsibility of the church is brought down to the simple matter of selecting and encouraging persons of a truly evangelical spirit, and of competent intellectual qualities, to consecrate themselves to the ministry.

These brief propositions exhibit the scope and tenor of Christian responsibility in this matter. And a very slight inspection will show just how we stand. We have a noble array of institutions of learning, the enduring monuments of the enlightened piety and patriotism of preceding generations, and the spirited emulation of our own. The course of study is already liberal, and every year is adding to the acuteness and richness of the instructions. Princely endowments, and various scholarships, leave the cost of education but a fragment of what it would be—hardly two-fifths of what it would be—if the current expenses were met by tuition fees. But notwithstanding all reductions, and free privileges, there is still an amount involved which competence feels to be great, and which is an insupportable burden to the ingenuous poor. The fountain is open, and its refreshing stream invites the thirsty; and if all could bring the golden cup from which to quaff the delicious draught, all might drink, yea, drink abundantly, and be satisfied.

But what is to be the fate of the many sons of the church, rich in mental gifts, richer in the infused spirit of the Master, but poor in this world's goods? How are they to work their way upward, so as to be fit ministers of the word, who have been called at the plough or the workshop, at the tradesman's counter or on the ship's deck; young men whose generous hearts, when touched by divine grace, expand to the whole circumference of a world's darkness and tribulation, and glow with an eager longing to save some of earth's perishing millions. The world can ill lose the earnestness, energy and hardihood with which such men, when equipped, throw themselves into the strife. Nor can the church spare such champions, in the hand to hand conflict with the powers of darkness. We will not advocate poverty as a necessary antecedent to success; but, taking such young men for just what they are, and just what they reasonably promise to be, is it not the wisest, the most prudent and politic course, to give them all the aid essential in their circumstances, to obtaining a complete education? So the judgment and the liberality of eminent Christian men have decided. From such a conviction sprung this Society, which has afforded salutary assistance to one-third of the existing ministry of our denomination in New England, to one-half of our Home Missionaries, and to two-thirds of those who have gone to the heathen. And many of these men have attained merited renown. They have enjoyed the well-earned confidence and respect of Christians, at home and abroad. They have been honored of God in the visible and substantial fruits of their labors. Multitudes have abundant occasion for gratitude, that such men have entered the ministry. They refute, by their noble and self-sacrificing devotion to human welfare, all inconsiderate and injurious cavils concerning the fruitless waste of charity funds. The obscurity of their origin only adds lustre to their enviable greatness.

If there is a position, to be looked up to from all ordinary stations with affectionate reverence; if there is a success, which is worthy the most cordial and grateful praise of mankind; if there is a memory, to be kept and transmitted with all the sacredness of crown jewels, and cherished as filial piety cherishes the tokens of parental honor,—it belongs to those who, from inauspicious and lowly beginnings, by labors, toils and self-denials, by studies, prayers, and the help of divine grace, have withstood adversities, surmounted obstacles, till they have been crowned of God, with a power and privilege of doing good, transcending their humble expectations, and only less than the largeness of their desires.

Doing good is ever greatness; the only admirable and worthy elevation. The greatness of doing evil is painful; the more so, as all greatness is an exercise of power; and the perversion of power, is the essence of infamy. The president of the Blood Council was great, but it was the greatness of a demon incarnate, before whom men stood aghast, as they do when the resistless breath of the pestilence smites them. Between greatness in goodness and greatness in evil, there is ever a chasm yawning wider and wider, till it stretches out into the impassable gulf between saints in heaven, and reprobates in hell.

The eulogies of the world are too often in harmony with the delirious exultations of the spirits of darkness. Renown clusters about destroyers. Strength gains the shout of the infatuated multitude. But the true glory of a man is goodness; true heroism, benevolence; the magnanimity of victory, the triumph over evil; and he is the highest upon the scale of genuine honor, who, forgetful of himself, has done most to elevate his fellow-men. If there is any sphere open to a lofty and holy emulation, it is in the ministry and the work of missions. A true eye sees nothing brighter. A true heart asks nothing larger. And if the courtly honors of the world are more attractive to the sons of affluence, than the humble labors of Christ's pastors, poverty shall bear the palm, and achieve the greatness, and the final reading of the roll will discover who are princes in the royal household, and who have ignobly wrestled for a fading crown.

It would be unjust, ungenerous even, to say, that the preaching of the gospel can be well accomplished only by men born to penury. Princely mansions, as well as humble cottages, have witnessed the rearing of ambassadors for Christ, and wealth has brought its richest offerings to the altar of God, when its sons have been laid thereon, as living sacrifices. And could we see entire consecration in the church, to the interests of God's kingdom, the highways to the harvest-field of the world would be crowded with earnest spirits in generous emulation, to take part in the toil and share in the ingathering. India and China would witness for Christ what the golden gates of California have witnessed for mammon.

But it is not so. Adventurers troop in multitudes where commerce opens the prospect of gain; the avenues to honor are thronged; the walks of pleasure and the bowers of ease are full of gay companions; but slowly do those come in, who are to take up arms and bear hardness as good soldiers of Christ. We might preach a crusade, and stimulate an unthinking enthusiasm. But converting the world is sterner work. A religious knight-errantry may ring its bells, hold up its baubles, exhibit its macerations and fastings upon a heathen shore, and credulous chroniclers may fill quartos with narratives of converts flocking to the cross, and the baptismal font. But Leviathan is not so tamed. The conquest of the world by the truth is not a crusade of swarming pilgrims, nor a day-dream of wild fanaticism, but a serious, protracted, soul-trying work; a siege to be managed with all the munitions of war and heavy enginery, which skill and courage can command and maintain.

Fervid Christian feeling and spontaneous impulses, voluntary and self-moved devotion, are well enough, but are insufficient. Bringing forward competent men, in adequate numbers, must be a work of calculation and system. The duty of the church, its privilege, is not felt as it should be. We do not understand our glory and joy as we should, if sympathy with Christ in redemption, and sympathy with suffering humanity were lively. Does not the call come from over the waters with mournful distinctness? Do not the heathen say, with cutting severity, Why did you let my fathers die in darkness, when you had the light? Does not a cry ascend from our own swelling population, in the familiar tones of kindred and friends? Is not the voice of the stranger sounding in our ears? And where is the piety, the philanthropy, the benevolence of the church, where is its zeal for God, if these voices, mingling and echoing, reiterated and re-echoing, are unheeded? They all ask for men to break the bread of life, and to hold to the feverish lip the cup of salvation. Are there not young men enough in our churches, if they were moved by the Spirit of the Master, to meet all these demands? And may it not be asked, Does the church admit the claim, and set apart its sons? Is the church pervaded with the evangelical spirit? Does it breathe this spirit into the converts who are received into the fold? Do they come as recruits whom the church is anxious and earnest to drill and equip for the warfare? Is it the calculation and system, deliberately adopted and carried out, to take disciples and send them forth, as if the world's redemption were a matter of Christian business, as distinct and as practicable, as reducing the forest and reclaiming the wilderness?

The theory on this subject is sufficiently accepted. But God puts our faith and love to the test. His kingdom requires sacrifices. We show our love by making them. The proof is often severe; for it cuts keenly across love of gain, and the luxurious enjoyment of religion. It is a sacrifice to give up the men. It requires money to fit them for duty. It taxes piety to take the high stand of meeting, with a cheerful zeal and prudent calculation, all these demands. And we are apt in the tameness of our spirit to ask, Is it not enough to let those go into the ministry who feel the call of God; and can they not take care of themselves? Taking care of themselves means, that they should give up the worldly advantages to which others cling; devote ten tedious years to study, to obtain the necessary culture, and during all that time tax themselves by extraordinary efforts, to make up deficiencies in expense, which the penury of friends cannot, and which the charity foundations do not supply.

And must these men forego all temporal advantages for the ministry, and furnish themselves at their own charges? Is the law of self-denial for Christ binding upon a few hundreds of missionaries, and a few thousands of ministers; and is a dispensation of ease granted to all the rest? Should not the church be alert and beforehand, and seize the privilege of aiding those, who can do a work which they are not allowed to engage in, so that those who stay by the stuff, and those who put on the armor, may have a common interest in the glorious success? For the command is to all; and missionaries and preachers are only the servants who are sent to fulfill a precept as imperative upon others as upon themselves. Some there are, who can work their way through courageously and persistently, and, like the Apostle, will eat no man's bread for nought. Others can do it; but the burden breaks them down, so that before they accomplish much, they are crippled and laid aside for life. Others, not less sanctified, not less earnest, not less self-denying, not less promising, cannot do it. For there are sensitive natures which respond quickly to the sufferings of humanity; hearts full of zeal for the Redeemer's cause; intellects of the finest mould, to whom the ways and methods of gain are an unknown land; a labyrinth, the clue to which they never find. They are the men whose spirituality is the purest, whose fervors kindle the hearts of others, whose earnestness is a transcendent power in doing good; whose attainments may be an ornament to the ministry, and whose eloquence may sway the minds of waiting thousands. Such men cannot study, and at the same time earn their bread. It is cruelty to ask it. It is suicide to attempt it. And yet the church needs them, needs all the men it can have; and it is uneconomical and wasteful, to pursue a method which must ruin some hopelessly, and lose them to the cause, and cripple others so as to impair the working energy of a life. The alternative is an incompetently educated, or an insufficiently numerous, ministry.

The want of wisdom in these things is forcibly illustrated by the keener sagacity of the world. The military service of our country is not left to depend upon the self-sustained patriotism and warlike impulses of our citizens. The United States educates its own officers and engineers. It does not do it in part, but entirely and amply. It opens its military academy to select young men. Its rules in respect to mental capacity, to healthiness and firmness of constitution, freedom from all defects in the physical organization, and ability to bear the hardships of a soldier's life, are minute and rigid. Its discipline is enforced with exactness; its instruction is not only ample for the purpose, but profound and thorough; its examinations searching; its excisions unsparing. The cadets who are hereafter to serve the country, in the conduct of the army and in superintending public works, are not compelled to earn their own bread while they are pursuing their course of study. They are not permitted to trench upon their time for that purpose. They are paid, instead of paying, and provided for, instead of providing, from first to last; the entire instruction free, and thirty dollars per month for current personal expenses; bringing the entire charge of each student to government about six hundred and fifty dollars per annum. The annual expenditure upon this school, unsurpassed in the soundness and extent of its mathematical and scientific instruction, is one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, exclusive of property vested in lands, buildings, and the various apparatus and appointments of the station; a sum equal to the interest on an endowment of two and a half millions of dollars. And if the safety and interests of the nation demand officers for the army, and military and civil engineers, versed in the science and art of war, fortification, construction, and the entire round of tactics, is not this arrangement, though expensive, worthy all commendation? And why should the church be so parsimonious and unthrifty in preparing her sons for the more magnanimous and beneficent service of the Redeemer?

But, it is asked, does not the system of educating men, instead of leaving them to educate themselves, have an effect to break down their self-respect? Does it not imply a want of manliness, to accept such aid; and does it not cherish a pusillanimous temper, and destroy independence of character? If these results are essential to the system, then let it be abandoned. We want no cravens and hirelings in the ministry. The service calls for independent, firm men; men above the fear of their fellows, and humble in the sight of God. We want a liberal, high-minded, magnanimous ministry; men inspired with the nobleness of their office, who feel that it is a great honor, conferred of God, to be in the ministry, and who will open their mouths boldly to speak their messages as they ought to speak. The gospel cultivates humility, but not servility; its advocates should be meek and lowly, but not of little soul or mean spirit. The servants of Christ should have hearts as free, as expansive, as generous, as the gospel which they proclaim.

But does it thus reduce and unman one to be aided in his preparation. Would Napoleon have stimulated the youth of France by bursaries in all that organization of schools throughout the kingdom, by which he systematically kindled, in young men, the love of arms? One hundred and fifty charity foundations were attached to every school, for the encouragement of the indigent. And then those of promising talents and temperament, were transferred to the Polytechnic School, on free foundations, so as not only to gather into the army the genius and choicest energy of the nation, but to furnish officers of the most thorough military and scientific education. Did it ever occur to Napoleon that he was fostering a method which would eat out the manliness and self-reliance of the leaders of the invincible legions of France?

The intrepid Marshal Ney, whom Napoleon called the bravest of the brave, for whose safety he once said he would willingly sacrifice the ten millions of treasure in the vaults of the Tuilleries, used to look back from the brilliant honors and high renown of his successful career, with pride, to the days when he thought himself rich if two loaves of bread graced his table. Would Marshal Ney have been less brave, if his poverty had been helped by the charitable institutes of his beloved General, and his impulsive mind disciplined by a severer education?

Still it is said, Is not this system of education a beneficiary system? And is there not a stigma in being called a charity student? It is true, painfully so, that students have been reproached by the unkindly application of that phrase. Scholars have been subjected to menial offices because they were poor, and have been looked down upon, by those who in after years have been well content to count it an honor to remember them as classmates.

But what is it to be a charity student? It is to receive privileges provided by philanthropic and charitable persons gratuitously. He is a beneficiary, who receives benefits for which he does not pay. The son of a day laborer, who enjoys the tuition of that distinguished and most efficient of public schools, the Boston Latin School, is a beneficiary of the city of Boston. The most affluent citizen cannot purchase for his son, with all his wealth, a more thorough classical preparatory training than this same lad obtains free of charge. Every graduate of Cambridge University is a beneficiary of John Harvard, and that illustrious succession of founders and donors of the College, whose names shine brighter than the letters of gold which crown her alcoves, and whose memories are fresher than the portraits that speak to us from her walls. Her lecture-rooms and libraries; her halls and chapels; her observatory, and all the exquisite implements and apparatus for scientific investigation; her grounds and walks, associated with youth's halcyon days and most animated aspirations, are all gifts of opulence and religion. Every alumnus who has slept under those venerable roofs, or listened to the wisdom of her erudite and accomplished teachers; or enriched himself from the mines of her treasured knowledge; or felt the inspiration of her classic renown, is a beneficiary; and shall I not say a grateful one; deeming it an honor to have been reared upon a bounty so munificent. Already have her endowments expanded from the inconsiderable foundation of her first benefactor, and the slow accumulations of town collections in money and produce, to the princely sum of a million and thirty-two thousand dollars. And is not he a beneficiary, both of the living and the dead, who comes and drinks of the perennial streams, flowing out from the fountain into which have been collected and treasured the rills of charity and patriotic munificence for two centuries? And are the sons of Harvard, the graduates of her law, medical and theological schools, less honorable men, because the lovers of good learning in former days are their patrons? Who that can call that mother and queen of all our institutions, ALMA MATER, does not rejoice in the privilege? Who ever thought that the illustrious catalogue of statesmen, jurists, physicians and divines, whose fame gives lustre to her history, were subjected to a humiliating dependence by accepting her favors?

But if it is degrading to be a beneficiary, then did the Mathers, the Adamses, the Buckminsters, and a multitude of venerable names whom men have delighted to honor, in their early rising pass under this disastrous eclipse. For these men, as well as the unfortunate pastor who, born in poverty, and living obscurely in the field appointed by his Master, dies in poverty and transmits poverty to his children, for their inheritance, were gratuitously nursed at the same breast. And shall the children spurn the mother's milk because it is a gift?

But it is said there is a difference. If all liberally educated men are beneficiaries, candidates for the ministry are so by a speciality, and by a disagreeable notoriety. There is a difference, just the difference of less and more in the application of the same principle. A student in Harvard, who receives the income of the Kirkland or Saltonstall scholarship, is a special beneficiary. The reduction of term bills by exhibition money, constitutes a student a special beneficiary. And is it not equally an honor to giver and receiver, that some who drew their earliest breath in retired villages, have by such extraordinary aid been enabled to withstand the depressing influences of poverty, and rise to the highest places of literary and civil distinction? Did it harm them, then, when their youthful hopes were cheered, and their burdens lightened by the bounty? Does it harm them now, when all men reverence their worth and admire their success?

The system of special scholarships is incorporated in the endowment of most of our colleges and seminaries. And this eleemosynary aspect of education, making the priceless boon so far without price to the necessitous, originating six hundred years ago, and yielding inestimable harvests of blessing, can not be dispensed with. It would be like drying up those heaven-provided reservoirs in the hills, which pour out sparkling streams by the poor man's cottage, and compelling the thirsty to draw water for a price, or faint by the way.

But it may properly be asked, if a general education is provided at less than half its actual cost, and special cases are met by scholarships, is not this enough? Why make theological students pensioners upon the charities of the church, and expose them to all the captiousness of malicious and narrow minds? Is it then honorable to be a beneficiary of the dead, and dishonorable to be a beneficiary of the living? Was the piety that consecrated the foundations, so much purer than that which builds into the superstructure? Do the prayers of the departed yield a more welcome inspiration than the prayers which go up fresh, like morning incense, from hearts still beating in sympathy, and warm with the life-blood of spiritual desires? If the scholarships were ample, which they are not, it would not be wise to sever from the living church, her sons whom, with grateful emotion, she has given to the service of the Redeemer. A divinity student needs something more than sound learning. More precious to him than all the lore of the rabbis, and the dialectics of the masters, is the anointing of the Holy One, and the enlightening presence of the Sanctifier. And how came this royal gift upon the Apostles; how comes it upon the teachers whose word is with power, but by the prayers of the disciples? And is it not the highest wisdom to bind, in closest sympathy, the church and those who need her benediction; to keep open the communication so that the warmth of the Christian heart shall pass over to those whom the church is nurturing? And is there any better way than that our alms and our prayers should go up together, and our bounty be dispensed, like the blessings of the tree of life, which yielded her fruit every month?

Deeply as I reverence the forecast and far-reaching philanthropy of the ever-honored names connected with the broad foundations of our institutions; cordially as I extol the nobleness of the benefactions which have erected so many free scholarships, I should bewail the day when no gifts came from the living, sanctified by their prayers and sympathies, for the encouragement of those who are struggling against adversity, that they may become ambassadors for Christ. If it is honorable to do the work of the church in converting the world, it is honorable for the church, for whom the work is done, to train the men; and it is honorable for the men to receive the training, not from the dead only, who never knew them, but from the living, whose glowing hearts feel for them, whose grateful hopes repose upon them.

Now it is only in this particular, that the Education Society has a special claim. Besides the products of its vested funds, it is the almoner of the fresh bounty of the church; the dispenser of her free and cordial charities to those who are to fill the pulpits of the land, and carry the gospel to the heathen. And it ought to be known that the benefactions are incompetent to the existing emergency. Pulpits are multiplying faster than preachers. College graduates gain in a fearful ratio upon graduates destined for the sacred office. Once they were nearly one-half; now only one-sixth. The golden promises of the world are too alluring, and the minority, only, give themselves to the anticipated self-denials and straitness of a pastor's life; a life of all others the most enviable; a position of all others the noblest; a sphere of duty the happiest, though it be deeply shaded with penury and heavily pressed with what the world calls calamity. And if any man shuns this service for its lack of the attractions of worldly comfort and gratification, he wisely shuns it; for he who does not find a charm in toiling and suffering for and with our glorious Redeemer, in the sufficient expectation of living and reigning with him, is no man for the service.

The churches are not doing enough. Only 162,* out of the 1,418 Congregational churches of New England contribute,

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* This statement was taken from our Report for the year ending April 30th, 1857. In casting up our books for the year which has just closed, we are happy to find the state of the case materially improved.

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| In Massachusetts, | 95 | churches | have | contributed. |
| " Maine, | 29 | " | " | " |
| " New Hampshire, | 36 | " | " | " |
| " Vermont, | 14 | " | " | " |
| " Connecticut, | 23 | " | " | " |
| " Rhode Island, | 2 | " | " | " |
| Total, | 199 | " | out of 1,418, the whole number of | |

Orthodox Congregational churches in New England.

namely: — In Massachusetts, of 475 churches, 87; in Maine, of 241 churches, 29; in New Hampshire, of 191 churches, 30; in Vermont, of 198 churches, 8; in Connecticut, of 290 churches, 7; in Rhode Island, of 23 churches, 1. It is wasteful parsimony and bad calculation, not at once to enlarge our relief to the beneficiaries, by increasing the annual appropriation from $80 to $100, instead of leaving students of ardent piety and good endowments to bear a load which impoverishes their strength, and reduces their energy. For it is more depressing to bear the opprobrium and responsibility of owing a pecuniary debt, which one cannot pay, than to feel the obligation of Christian gratitude to those who have served Christ in helping us. And this enlargement could be effected, if Christians would open their eyes, and suffer their hearts to be moved. And especially, now, when the power of God has gone before us and touched the hearts of young men in cities, villages, schools and colleges, many of whom will be saying, Here am I, send me. Very long has the lamentation been heard, the laborers are few; for many years supplications have been treasuring in heaven, that God would raise up men; and now the day of Pentecost has come; the Spirit is poured out; great multitudes enlist under the banner of the cross. And where is the hinderance in the way of great accessions to the number of ministers and missionaries, if the church will meet liberally the emergency, and be zealous to consecrate these new-born sons to the Redeemer's service, and ready to provide all needful means for their furnishing for the field.

Very high and reasonable would be our expectations of accelerated progress in extending the Redeemer's kingdom, if, with freedom and cordiality, with cheering and generous readiness, not stintedly, penuriously or faintly, but with an amplitude and largeness, like the abundant outpourings of the Spirit, the church would say to all young men of fit mental endowments and apostolic aspirations, Give yourselves to the ministry, and we will sustain you from our substance; we will help you with our prayers; our sympathies shall be with you; in your toils and trials we will share, and for your successes we will join with you in praise to God. Then would the increase of laborers save the perishing harvest.

# MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

A

# DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

# AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING IN BOSTON,

MAY 24, 1859.

BY REV. JACOB M. MANNING.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN & SON, 42 CONGRESS STREET.
1859.

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From Pph. Vol. 389.

69350
A. J. Corsen
June 13, 1865.

# DISCOURSE.

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LUKE x. 2.

THE HARVEST TRULY IS GREAT, BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW.

It is not my purpose, in the remarks now to be offered, to attempt any weighty discussion, like those which have usually signalized this anniversary occasion; but simply to bring the claims of the American Education Society before you, in as practical a manner as possible. And in doing this, I shall be careful not to exaggerate the importance of the Society, or appeal to mere feeling by presenting individual cases of distress; but shall endeavor to place the matter clearly on the ground of Christian principle, leaving it to every one's conscience to determine the amount of his obligation.

We are inclined, even the most zealous of us, to narrow views of the work which God's people have undertaken. Indeed, it is often the direct tendency of zeal to limit our vision. We may be so absorbed in the special labor we are accomplishing, that it shall seem to us to be the all-important labor: we shall become so possessed with it, and so indifferent to other enterprises, as to think that it is the central sun in the system; whereas it may really be only the smallest satellite of some third or fourth grade planet. For instance; you make choice of a man to be your minister, and put him into a parish. That is his field of labor above all others. He has been assigned to it particularly; and, whatever else he may do, he ought to know that for that he is personally responsible. It will not do for him to spend his time in prospecting; to neglect his own vineyard, and go about seeing how other vineyards are faring. He must stay at home; nor ever slumber, but be vigilant at his post; more anxious to do his own work, than to speculate about the general welfare. His very faithfulness, therefore, tends to contract his horizon. "Are my parishioners well instructed? Do my church-members live consistently and self-denyingly? Is my Sabbath-school large and efficient? Are my social meetings fully attended, and sustained by a genuine piety?" Such are the questions which press upon him. He puts them to himself tremblingly. He uses the word "my" so often, not as though every thing in the parish belonged to him, but because he feels personally accountable in these matters. And suppose that he is allowed to see every thing in his own field prospering? The church, the congregation, the prayer-meetings, the Sabbath-school, may be all which he feels that they ought to be; and at the same time there may be a desert around him. It is not a single oasis, that can make the entire wilderness blossom as the rose. This building over against our own house may be carried too far, especially if we get our bricks and cement from the walls over against our neighbors' houses. It is sadly true, though no one perhaps can be blamed for it, that many a church flourishes at the expense of some other church or churches. The elements of strength change places, being attracted now to this centre and now to that, but in the aggregate there may not be much gain after all. Now any church is apt to take its own condition as an index of the condition of the church universal. If it is prosperous, it sees signs of the millennium; but if it is losing ground, it has only faint hope for Christianity any where. Disappointed men, or bodies of men, are apt to think that every thing is going wrong; while those who succeed incline to believe that the world, as a whole, is growing better.

Either of these impressions, however, rests on insufficient data; it may not be such as all the facts warrant, not such as they demand. You may think that Christ's work is going forward rapidly in the earth, my hearer, just because there is cheering progress in your particular locality. On a field of battle, where many detachments are sent forth from the main army, some of them may be victorious, scattering the forces opposed to them; and yet the entire field may not be won. The commander-in-chief, standing on some eminence which overlooks the plain, may behold a general defeat which shall swallow up any victories gained by these smaller bands. So your prosperity, however glorious and extraordinary in itself, may be only an eddy in a broad stream of misfortune. A single rift through the clouds does not make a clear day. One voice of triumph is not much, if lifted up in the midst of a general death-wail.

Those seventy disciples whom Christ sent out, had no comprehension of the work before them. Each one might fulfill his mission, in his more especial sphere, and yet hardly a beginning be made in the great plan for saving men. When Jesus had prepared the little company, and was about bidding them forth, a feeling of sadness seemed for the moment to come over him. Again the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them, passed before him. It was not Judea simply, but a world which needed to be evangelized. Looking over the vast expanse, and then contemplating the feeble band of preachers, he exclaimed, in words bursting with meaning, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few."

Now, the American Education Society invites us to take such a view as Christ then took, of the wants of the world. It asks us to forget our own special localities for a few moments, and look abroad over the whole harvest-field; and to consider what we, in connection with its efforts, may do toward sending forth more laborers. It does not ask us to cast our money unthinkingly into its treasury, but desires us first to weigh its claims justly. Is there any occasion for such a society? Is there such a dearth of Christian ministers as to render it necessary, that a society should exist for the sole purpose of helping young men into the ministry? There may not be any such dearth in the parishes from which we have come. There may even be more laborers than fields of labor, so far as most of us have discovered. But the territory which you have considered may be only a very small part of Christ's vineyard. Go away from it a thousand miles, and hardly any impression of it would remain. It would be narrowed down to a point; nothing of it but one dear spot, and a small circle of friends, would be left in your memory. Our denomination may not have more than twelve pulpits in the city of Boston. But in Massachusetts there are nearly five hundred pulpits; and in the six New England States there are about fourteen hundred. Fourteen hundred pastors, in our denomination alone, are needed this day in the six Eastern States of the Union. And this demand is increasing every year.

We should naturally expect it to keep pace with the increase of population. Ninety-seven Congregational churches were organized in Massachusetts, from the year 1820 to the year 1830. During the ten years following, eighty were organized. And from 1840 up to the close of 1857, one hundred and three were organized. In 1858, fourteen were organized. So rapid is the increase, in this single Commonwealth. And this is the oldest in the sisterhood of six, making it fair to suppose that the increase is at least quite as rapid proportionably, in the other five. It is safe to say, that within the compass of these six States alone, and in our single denomination, the ministerial force needs, year by year, an absolute increase of some fifty men. Let us suppose, also, that ten pastors within this territory are removed annually by death. This addition swells the number to sixty men, who need to be brought into the field of our ministry yearly, in New England. Let us say that five more are needed, each year, to fill vacant professorships in our colleges, and five more to carry forward the plans of the great benevolent associations. These give an aggregate of seventy new men, who should be brought annually into the field. To this number we must still add those who, upon finishing their studies, enter other Christian denominations. Considering how many go West, and South, and become Presbyterian pastors, one-seventh of the whole number sent out yearly, is a moderate allowance for these. Here, then, we have eighty, as the number of ministers which Congregationalists, in New England alone, should annually bring forward. And here again we should allow,—say one-eighth,—for those who fail; who, though entered upon the field, prove not to be adapted to the work, or are discouraged by unforeseen obstacles; and, after a few unsuccessful attempts, turn aside to other pursuits. In all, then, we have ninety men, as the number who should come forth year by year,—earnest Christians, college-bred, and thoroughly instructed in the doctrines of the gospel,—in order that the wants of our own denomination in New England may be met. Is this supply furnished? Far from it. Andover, Bangor, East Windsor and New Haven seminaries, are our only theological schools. All these together send out some sixty preachers a year. Hence there is an annual deficiency of thirty men. Let it also be borne in mind, that this proportion of the supply to the demand,—two-thirds,—is not increasing measurably, but the rather diminishing. Relatively to the amount of work to be done, fewer men are now entering the ministry than at a former period. Such is a rough estimate of the state of things in New England. In view of it, the words of the Great Preacher rush unbidden to our lips; we cannot but exclaim, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few." What shall become, even of the heritage of the Pilgrims, if the Lord of the harvest does not send forth more laborers?

But the Education Society asks us to look beyond the limits of New England. How much more startling does this deficiency appear, when we consider the wants of those new States which are springing up along the Pacific coast, when we cast our eye Southward, and Westward, and Northward, and especially when we take a view of the Orient and of the islands of the sea! The Macedonian cry comes up from every point of the compass, and from the most distant abodes of men. The Home Missionary work employs more than a thousand preachers, and could easily furnish places for as many more. And what shall we say of Foreign Missions? It is appalling to think of the disparity here. The American Board has about one hundred and sixty-four ordained missionaries, distributed among the six or eight hundred millions of the pagan world. As though, in the United States, there were one preacher at Boston, another at Philadelphia, a third at New Orleans, one at Cincinnati, possibly another at San Francisco; and all around these the vices and horrible superstitions of heathenism. We will not dwell longer on this mighty, world-wide demand. It is so great that we fail to comprehend it; it overwhelms and stupefies the mind. I grant that much besides preachers is needed for this vast work; but they are the great demand; everything else depends upon them. They must keep in advance of other agencies, and wield those agencies, or all will be in vain.

And now, what can we do toward furnishing men to increase the number of this scattered and overworked ministry?

That I may not seem to estimate the Education Society too highly, let us look, first, at some other instrumentalities which we may rely on.

1. Ministers themselves may do something, by giving young

men a favorable impression of their calling. This is not always done. Many pastors complain of their hardships, of their trials, of their great responsibilities. Any little opposition disheartens them. They lean upon everybody, and levy sympathy wherever they go. Their habitual air is that of dejection, discouragement and failure. Now the tendency of all this is to repel the nobler class of young men from the ministry. They do not wish to go where they shall lose their manhood; where they shall sink into cowering, faint-hearted objects of pity; where they shall forfeit the privilege of standing erect among their fellows, and speaking and acting according to their convictions. Let them be made to feel that the ministry is the best of all spheres for cultivating their manly powers. Let them see, in the pulpit, men who are contented; nay, more than contented, who glory in the office of preacher and pastor; who bring all their faculties to the great work, and show that it consists with every species of generous culture; who do not lose their joy, nor falter and shrink, but only press forward the more bravely, when opposed. Let high-minded Christian young men see such ministers in the parishes, and they will be attracted. Many might thus be led to the ministry, who now turn away from it as an obsequious drudgery.

2. Churches may do something, toward supplying this want of laborers, by letting it be understood that they wish their pastors to be outspoken and independent men. There is an impression among students, whether correct or not, that if they go into the ministry they shall be trammeled; that they shall be made directly dependent on men holding scores of various and conflicting opinions, all of whom they must humor largely, to keep them contented. They often look, with a kind of commiseration, on that classmate who means to be a preacher. Especially if he be a bright and manly fellow, do they pity him for his choice, and oftentimes urge him to reconsider it. The argument is, that he will not be allowed to be true to himself; that he will be pinioned; that he will be forbidden to take sides on a great many important questions; that he will ever be subjected to an unkind surveillance.

Just look, my hearers, at any ordinary parish. It is crowded with all sorts of prejudices, tastes and notions. To please one, you must regard the poor only; to please another, you must be a pastor to the rich alone. This one believes in total abstinence; that one forwarns you not to touch his wine cup; and thus we might go on, to almost any length. Why, that parish is like a vast hall, full of all manner of fragile furniture, which the touch of a child's finger may overturn. Here are inverted pyramids of hollow glass, and there are leaning towers of porcelain, and all around are seen fragile, glittering pendents, which a single stamp of the foot would bring crashing about you. If you ask a young Christian man to come into such a place as that, and bring out his artillery, and charge it to the utmost with what he regards as gospel truths, and keep it a-firing from year to year; but, at the same time, give him to understand that he must leave if he damages anything: make him such an offer, I say, and if he has any self-respect, one of two things must be true—either he has made up his mind not to be afraid of the face of man, or else he will decline your invitation. Such a prospect as this has driven many a bright intellect away from the ministry, into other professions, or into business. If you would see the ranks of preachers replenished with some of the better class of minds, you must let the impression go out, into all parts of society, that you want pastors who will not be so careful to humor you in your small peculiarities, as to speak out their real convictions of Christian duty.

3. This supplying of ministers depends largely on the tone of piety in the church and family. Let the current of religious feeling be deep and broad in the church, and it will bear many new converts on to the pastoral office. They will catch the spirit of this hearty devotion to Christ; will forget their ambitious, worldly plans, and count it not only their duty, but their joy, to preach the gospel.

But in the family, above all, may young men have this direction given to their energies. If Christian parents are lukewarm; if they show that the service of God is not their business in life, so much as worldly advancement, their children will naturally be no better. Should their son ever become hopefully pious, in so cold an atmosphere, he will not think of the ministry. I fear there are some Christian parents who would even be disappointed, if a son of theirs showed any such leanings. They have marked out another path for him, which lies along the way of earthly glory. When all your households are what you promised to make them on the day of your espousals to Christ; when religious instruction, and prayer, and visible piety sweeten all the intercourse of your homes, and your children see that to follow Jesus is your joy, and your highest hope for them, their steps will naturally incline to the Christian ministry. It does not speak well for your piety, believing parents, if none of your converted sons have a longing to preach the gospel.

I will not detain you longer with these instrumentalities. You will readily see, although they can do much, that they still are ineffectual without the addition of such help as the American Education Society furnishes. Ministers, churches and believing parents, may conduct themselves in such a manner as to produce, in Christian young men, a willingness and a longing to preach the gospel; but after this, the means must be supplied to carry out that desire. How shall these young men get over the interval,—often amounting to ten years of hard study,—which lies between them and the ministry? Some will pass along easily enough, having every want supplied, and more than supplied, out of the parental treasury. But what shall those do who have no such resource? "We will take them under our guardianship," says this Society. "We will do somewhat, small though it be, to supply the place of a wealthy parentage. Their generous desire shall not be thwarted on account of their poverty. They shall not say that Christ calls only the rich to be his ministers; that the door is shut against all, however noble in soul, whose fathers and mothers happen to be poor. Let the churches contribute, and we will be their faithful almoners. We will examine these young men, one by one. And if we find them really unable to educate themselves, and if they seem to us to be intellectually and religiously fitted for the work of the ministry, we will help them onward. They shall not feel obliged to give up their dearest wish, and turn aside to some secular pursuit."

Such is the proposition; and though I think it finds a ready response in all our hearts, there are a few possible objections. These we will now consider.

1. It may be asked, "Why should we help men into this profession rather than into any other?" For several reasons. We should do it because the profession is not full, nor likely to be. Is

it so in the other professions? Are physicians and lawyers anxious to see multitudes of new men, of the highest promise, flocking into their spheres of labor? Do they bring forward statistics, like those just presented, to show that there is an alarming dearth of legal and medical practitioners? It certainly means something, when Christian pastors, all over the land, are asking for co-laborers. It indicates that they are not afraid of competition. The very fact that a society exists to supply ministers for the churches—a society originated by ministers—proves that there is an amazing difference between the position of a preacher and that of men in other professions. These men do not make such special efforts to increase their own number. And how is it in the various departments of business? Do you who are tradesmen feel that the country is suffering for want of more tradesmen? Do you originate societies, and send forth agents to solicit young men to come and help you manage the mercantile interests of the land? If you did, we of other callings in life should defer to your judgment, and contribute liberally, believing that our food and clothing and home comforts depended on it. Just so should it be in this case. Ministers are subject to the same influences as other Christian men; and they are capable of judging in their own department; and now, if they are anxious to see more men in their profession, and are putting forth efforts to get them, it proves that there is a most pressing call for such endeavors.

There are other peculiarities, lying back of this, which constitute a special reason for smoothing the way of young men into the ministry. It is a difficult calling to exchange for any other, and it does not admit of other pursuits, to any great extent, in connection with it. The lawyer or physician is not confined to a single path. He can, at any moment, turn his activities into a new channel, and nothing strange is thought of it. He may use his profession simply as a stepping-stone to political honors, or as the means of acquiring a fortune. On the other hand, if a man once becomes known as a minister, people never forget it. He is a marked man. It is rarely the case, if he succeeds here, that he ever succeeds any where else. His motives will be suspected. He will be called ambitious, and even his piety will be doubted, if he turns aside from his sacred work into a secular pursuit. Nor can he unite secular plans with his profession. He cannot, like those who practice law or medicine, be at the same time an operator in stocks, real estate, and other schemes which promise wealth or fame. If he is detected in such business as this, it cripples his influence at once; and though he be not detected in it, it gradually unfits him for his duties.

Those who enter other callings, need not fear a heavy debt contracted in the course of preparation; for they may hope, by their skill and prudence, to become ultimately independent. The minister has no such hope. He must not allow the desire of accumulating to rise within him. Constant poverty, or at least absence of wealth, is one of the conditions of his success, as a preacher. He can hardly help failing as a preacher, if he attempts to make an earthly fortune. Whether he is a general favorite or not, and whether his parish be strong or weak, it will be about the same with him, so far as the things of this world are concerned. Now, it seems to me that these facts make a very weighty reason for distinguishing the ministerial, from other professions. He who enters upon such a work, ought not to be loaded with a heavy burden while he is approaching it. Do you say that he should take a little more time, and pay his way as he goes? You would not thank anybody for giving such a hint to your son. You think it a great deal better for him that his studies should not be thus interrupted; and it is, as it also is for all other students. This "paying as you go" did very well, when expenses were small and labor easy to be had. But what is there for the poor student to do now? And though he should work, his earnings must fall far short of his expenditures. It is as unwise for him to think of supporting himself, as it is for him to contract a heavy debt. Such efforts will wear him out, in the process of getting ready to work. It is cruel for him to enter the ministry burdened with pecuniary obligations; and his case is not better, but worse, if instead of this he has a broken-down constitution.

2. It is sometimes said that the students whom this Society aids, are an inferior class of men, and that not a few of them turn out a mere drug in the ministerial market. I could show the falsity of this statement, were there time, by letters from nearly all the college presidents of our denomination. They testify, with one

consent, that this class of students is, as a whole, more promising than any other. We should naturally expect this. The great social law, by which the leading men of every generation come out of obscurity, is traceable in the church as well as elsewhere. It has more exceptions here than in the secular departments of life, for there is a power in godliness to save ancient families from decay; still it is true, generally, that Christian young men of a lowly origin, promise most for the pastoral office. It would be invidious to call names here; but if I should, you would be surprised to find how many, of the most successful pastors of our land, as well as missionaries, have been aided by the Education Society. It has been ascertained that one-third of all the pastors in Massachusetts have received such help. And this proportion is becoming larger every year. And, what is most noticeable of all, that one-third of the whole number exerts nearly one-half of the whole influence. Who, then, will say that this Society is giving the churches an inferior order of men for pastors?

Of course there are some failures. But these beneficiaries do not fail as often as their rich classmates. Waste is incident to every enterprise in this world. How is it in mercantile life? I have heard it said, that not much more than one out of a hundred succeeds in Boston. Are all lawyers, and all physicians, eminent in their professions? Why complain, then, that some ministers are not fitted for their calling? If you compare them with other classes of workmen, none can bear a more rigid scrutiny in this particular. We should take these failures into the account beforehand; and hence provide not less, but more liberally, for the raising up of a Christian ministry. In this particular, preachers may be compared to the watch-crystals in an optician's cabinet. Some have an elemental defect, some are spoiled in casting, packing and transporting ruin others. Your watch demands one aptitude, another man's a different fitness. Many of these crystals are broken in setting; and, unless you are careful of them, they do not last long. And all this shows—not that the manufacturing of them should cease, but that a large supply should ever be kept ready.

3. It has been objected that the Education Society is detracting from the respectability of the ministerial profession. "Young men from the upper circles will not enter a profession," it is said,

"where so many of their compeers have been objects of charity. They deem it a lowering of themselves." This certainly is not a very respectable objection; but let us look at it. Do those same young patricians feel lowered by an education at West Point or Annapolis? It is well known that they sometimes resort to very low measures, that they may get into those institutions. Why should it be thought more humiliating to study at the expense of the church than at the expense of the state? Why should a man pay his way into the ministry, any more than into the army or navy? The church ought to feel under obligations to educate her own servants; it is not charity to them, but only justice, when she does this. Those who can meet the charges of their preparation should be glad to do so, but this self-support ought to be regarded as a clear donation to the churches. Washington refused any pay for his services in the war of the Revolution, and thus made a direct gift to the government. Why are not the two cases parallel? You who get the service are bound in justice to prepare the servant for his post; and hence, if this preparation is made at his own expense, you are the beneficiaries.

But it is not true that Christian students, from wealthy and refined families, feel humbled by standing on a level with the sons of poverty. They are not chargeable with any small pride of this sort. Some of the dearest friendships, in the college and seminary, have grown up between these two extreme classes. The rich student learns to admire and love the native nobleness of the poor student; often becomes his room-mate, gives him a home in vacations, and interests wealthy friends for him. A great deal has been done in this way, during the past few years, to help on struggling students. Without it, many would have been obliged to turn aside to secular pursuits. There are not a few large-hearted men in the community, who love to aid young candidates for the ministry, in this method. And it is the example of the Education Society, oftentimes, which has led them to see the need of these benefactions.

4. It is said that any student, who is a real man, will refuse to be helped. Undoubtedly he will, if he possibly can, while public sentiment remains what it now is. But here is the value of the Education Society to such a man: it is a last resort. You feel

safer on board a vessel, if it is well supplied with life-preservers. Probably you would not go on board at all, if they were not there, though you have little expectation of ever using them. When worst comes to worst, you feel that there is still a means of rescue. So this Society encourages the young man to begin. He does not mean ever to apply to it for help. He believes that he can pay his way. But he is not absolutely certain. The costs may be more than he anticipates; and it makes him feel easier in mind, it keeps him from shrinking from the undertaking, to know that there is a life-preserver at hand, to which he may flee in case of extremity. Some men, who would never start but for this Society, do manage to complete their studies without its aid. Others are obliged to fall back upon it only a few times; hardly any receive from it more than a small fraction of their expenditures. The beauty of it is, that it helps the student just when he is about to sink for want of help. It gives the boat a lift now and then, that it may get over some reef or sand-bar. A few dollars are given, here and there, at critical points, and thus a great blessing is secured to the churches. This assistance has never yet amounted to more than eighty dollars a year to one individual; and I am glad to learn that the Society is attempting to raise this amount to one hundred dollars. It should be furnished with the means for doing this. The proposed increase is altogether too small, considering the increase of expense to which students have been subjected within a few years. Formerly, they could keep along in their studies with comparatively little help. But wealthy Christians, and business men generally, have gone out into the villages where the academies, colleges and seminaries are located, building elegant mansions there, taking with them their expensive households, and introducing city customs and city prices. It is certainly fair that you who have made it so much more expensive to study, should do a little more toward lessening the expense. Some of our large-minded laymen are beginning to feel the force of this altered state of things; and are doing what all should, that is, increasing their subscriptions proportionably. I could fill pages with accounts of the bitter struggles, which high-minded young men have made, and are daily making, rather than apply for this help. And shall such brave hearts cry in vain at last, when they are absolutely compelled to exclaim, "Save, or we perish!" Not a few have met this fatal repulse, during the past year. The Education Society has not had the means of responding even to these heroic calls of distress. Many a noble soul must be crushed, notwithstanding its struggles—and flock of Christ scattered, having no shepherd—if the churches of the land do not come forward promptly and with more generous donations.

And here let me correct an impression, still inhering in some minds, that the Education Society is a *modern* invention. It existed really, though not formally, more than a century ago. Pardon me if I refer, in proof of this statement, to a fact or two in the history of the Old South Church. The records of that church showed that it did much, in those early times, to help young men into the ministry. And not only as a body was it generous, but it had individuals in it who were remarkable for their gifts to this cause. Jonathan Mason, a deacon, and whose wife, as I suppose, was the sainted Mrs. Mason, gave a large sum for the divinity professorship at Harvard College, his object being to increase the facilities of theological students. Still farther back, in the time of Sewall and Prince, Daniel Henchman, another deacon, made two several donations to the same professorship. First he gave "one hundred ounces of silver," and not long after, "250 pounds, old tenor." And he conditioned the gift in these words, "the income to be given to the Hollis Professor, while in full communion with some Presbyterian or Congregational church, and while professing and teaching the well-known Confession of Faith drawn up by the Synod of the churches in New England." Now mark the addition. "On the failure of either condition," says Mr. Henchman, "the annual interest to be given, by the President and Fellows of Harvard College, to some deserving student of said College, whose parents are not able to bear the charges of his public education, and who shall be approved by the pastors of the Old South Church, in Boston, for the time being." Such was the bequest. The conditions affixed to it, in its original form, ceased to exist long ago. According to the wishes of the testator, therefore, it should be in the hands of the Old South pastors to-day; and could be used by them in helping such young men as they might approve, into the ministry. I will take this opportunity to say, however, to those young men who may think of applying to us for help, that Mr. Henchman's gift was absorbed in the general funds of the College, or otherwise lost sight of, long ago; and any claim for it which we now might bring, would not be likely to meet with any very respectful notice.

5. Let me call your attention especially to one other objection. And I will bring forward only one more; for these objections wheel into the line of positive proof with such facility, that there is danger of making too strong an argument. We are told that young men consume too much time in preparing for the ministry. "Ten years, spent in learning dead languages, mastering theological formulas and peering into worm-eaten books and manuscripts, are a needless waste," it is said. Fortunately for the interests of truth, this objection does not come from the more intelligent class of Christian laymen. And to all others it can easily be made clear, I think, that the term of study now allotted to those preparing for the ministry, should be lengthened rather than shortened.

It is necessary, in order to the greatest usefulness of a pastor, that his people should have a high opinion of his scholarly attainments, and of his abilities as a thinker. Even excellency of moral and religious life will not command all the respect he should have, where these intellectual qualifications are wanting. It is character in the speaker which gives authority to his utterances. He clothes the sentiments which fall from his lips, with his own personal worth or worthlessness. A great man makes a pithy remark, and it is quoted every where as a marvelous instance of wisdom; but thousands of just such sayings drop unheeded every day, because they are the words of persons having "no reputation." Let a congregation know, on Sabbath morning, that they are to have a young and uneducated preacher; and even if they conclude to hear him, they will make up their minds beforehand to receive his message with great caution. They will seize upon every grammatical and rhetorical mistake eagerly; and if he happens to say anything which startles them, they will hesitate whether to call it eloquent truth or fanciful extravagance. They must see how the closing prayer, made by some one for whom they have a profound respect, estimates the discourse; if that should happen to be unpropitious, the young divine may infer at once that he is as an heathen man and a publican to them. But let him lay aside that same unfortunate sermon; and after twenty-five years,—having meanwhile won a character for scholarship, wisdom and thorough acquaintance with all great questions,—let him reproduce it before some highly cultivated audience. Its loose composition is now regarded as the superiority of a great mind to literary exactness; if some parts of it are a little blind, this is imputed at once to the incapacity of the hearers; and if the lines of thought seem to cut across received opinions somewhat, it is not rashness, but the natural result of looking at things from a high point of view. Some of the most powerful discourses which "able and learned" divines ever preach, if I mistake not, are discourses which they have had lying by them a quarter of a century or more, and which produced but little effect comparatively, when first delivered.

Now this disadvantage, under which so many young ministers labor, only shows the need of a more thorough preparation. It indicates that the term at present assigned to theological study ought not to be curtailed, but extended. In order to remove this evil, and prepare congregations to reap the full benefit of pastoral effort, there must go before the graduate from the divinity school, an impression that he is thoroughly furnished. He must be introduced to the churches in a way which renders it certain that he is no novice; that he has carefully explored the fields of science and literature; that he has made himself familiar with the history of the human family; that he has given much deep and mature reflection to the grand doctrinal system of the Scriptures. Such an expectation, going in advance of him, will give power to his efforts; it will render his utterances weighty, although he is a new man; and will save him from the suspicion of fanaticism, if he ventures at any time to be a little interesting.

I have already spoken of certain points in which the ministerial profession differs from any other. It has one more peculiarity, which should be considered in this connection. Other callings introduce the young man gradually to posts of responsibility; this places him in the most responsible of all posts, at the threshold of his labors. Every parish feels itself to be a very important parish; and, if without a pastor, it wants a man "of experience," a "strong" man, a "wise" man. The business of the physician does not come upon him all at once; a lawyer is seldom overwhelmed with cases the first week after opening his office; the merchant begins as a clerk, and advances step by step into the cares and perplexities of trade. Not so the pastor. He is overwhelmed with an avalanche of work from the very beginning. It is often true that his labors are more pressing the first ten years of his ministry, than ever afterwards. His ordination throws him into a place where every thing needs to be done, and where he finds almost no one to help him do it. The prayer-meeting must have a new life breathed into it, the Sabbath-school will soon die if it is not put on a new footing, the meeting-house is out of repair, the congregation is thin, the people divided and discouraged. There are a thousand indispensable things to be done, and it seems indispensable that each one of them should be done first. If that young pastor shuts himself up in his study, and only appears with his two well written sermons on the Sabbath, he may find the end of his race nearly as soon as he enters upon it. In addition to his preparations for the pulpit he must do a vast amount of visiting, and ever show himself in the van of enterprise, infusing life into the various departments of effort. And besides this exhausting labor at home, the fact that he is a new man will expose him to many heavy drains from without. If he has muscle and nerve enough to carry him through this ten years' struggle, and if his hope and courage bear him on to acknowledged success, the rest of his life will be comparatively easy. Never again, probably, will he need to bring an equal amount of wisdom, charity, faith in God, and mental and physical vigor to his work. If he is destitute of these qualifications, then alas for him. He must take one or the other of two courses, both of which, with rare exceptions, end in failure. Either he may throw himself, with all his might, into the practical duties of his profession, or he may devote himself to study in the hope of gaining a character. If he takes the former course, all will be likely to go well for a time; but it will lead him into superficial habits of sermonizing, and give him a distaste for hard thinking; and then his people, having become numerous and prosperous, will demand a style of preaching of which he is incapable. They will say, "He is good for drawing in new material and giving things a start, but he is not enough of a scholar and theologian to feed mature Christians." Or suppose that the new pastor, dreading such a result, takes the other course. He devotes himself to his grammars and lexicons, determined that his people shall never suspect him of shallowness, and leaves the interests of the parish to get along as they best can. He has escaped the rock only to be drawn into the whirlpool. With all his strides in self-improvement, the state of his congregation does not seem to be improving. He has not that hold on the affections of the children, which many think he ought to have. His manner is too reserved; he does not know his people; and his presence is a restraint in the family and social meeting. And so it comes to pass, just as he is about learned and able enough to take rank with influential divines, that he is informed, very respectfully, of his want of fitness for that particular field of labor.

Possibly one man in a thousand could meet this exigency successfully. Though his preparation is imperfect, yet, being blessed with an iron frame and great buoyancy of spirits, he may be able to supply the demand for practical effort, and at the same time persevere in a course of intellectual training. But even that man will regret,—more as he lives longer,—that his preparatory discipline was neglected. And the probability is that he will never be considered as an entirely safe man; but will rank with that unfortunate class of preachers, whose brilliant sayings are such a trial to the fathers in the churches, and who compel us to spend so much time reading their explanations and defences in the newspapers.

Most candidates for the ministry,—conscious of not belonging to the number of these choice spirits, and desirous of escaping the two opposite perils alluded to,—have recourse to the following method: they go into some parish, where the actual demand on their strength will not be great, and there fit themselves for another and as they hope permanent field. This is the only course which they can take with safety. It is the course which wise laymen, friends, and oftentimes theological teachers advise them to take. They would be accused of ambition and presumption, should they go directly from the seminary to a conspicuous post of labor. "They are young," it is said. "They need more knowledge of men, more of careful reading and study, before thus venturing."

Now this method saves the minister perhaps, but it makes a great many sorrowful parishes. It is undoubtedly one cause of those frequent removals, which are so much to be regretted. I suspect that no one is saddened more than the pastor himself, when duty calls him away from an affectionate people. I know that many, rather than break from the tender relation, stay all their lifetime where the voice of the church says they should not. And it is not generous to such as obey that voice,—sundering loved ties in search of duty,—to lay all the blame of the evil at their door. They have only followed a plan which their self-distrust suggested at the beginning, and which they were advised to, as furnishing opportunities for more self-culture. If any parishes suffer, in such a state of things, let the evil be traced to its proper source. It grows out of that want of thorough preparation, which makes the young pastor feel that he must approach difficult posts of labor only step by step, and in the most cautious manner.

Now these evils can never be removed, but must remain in full number and force, while men only half-prepared continue flocking to the pastoral office. The youthful preacher,—mindful of his imperfect training, and following wise counsels,—will not respond to any advances from what are sometimes called the more important parishes; but, while aspiring modestly to stations for which his native powers fit him, he will seek these stations through that gradual approach to which so many painful separations are incident. If he does not adopt such a plan as this, but ventures at once into what he regards as his ultimate field, then it will happen, almost inevitably, either that his activity will end in shallowness, or that by trying to be profound, he will grow insufferably dull. It is one of the great merits of the American Education Society, that it seeks to correct this evil. It pleads for a thoroughly educated ministry. It warns us not to lower the standard of preparation. It exhorts us to prolong the term of study rather than cut it short; to give the divinity scholar more time, and more money that he may have more time, instead of hurrying him into his work. By providing for him generously, it impresses him with the truth that he is preparing for no trivial business. Being anxious to secure permanency in the pastoral office, and knowing that, in order to this, the opening years of a ministry must be the most laborious, this Society would retain the youthful candidate amid his studies as long as practicable. Its aim is to furnish the young pastor with a character—a prestige—which shall secure to his earliest efforts a respectful attention. It is struggling to prevent theological students, who give bright promise of usefulness, from disappointing the expectations they excite, because the hard hand of poverty presses them to their work prematurely. Give it your money—and it will not let these brave fellows go unpanoplied to the fight. Give it your money—and you shall have stable and successful pastors. Give it your money—and the harvest of the world shall not perish for lack of reapers.

In response to your generous gifts there shall come forth, out of the villages and hamlets of the land, multitudes of young men, on whose natures God hath placed his own seal of nobility ; eager to become heralds of the cross, and who will toil, with manly fortitude, through the weary years of preparation for their office ; till, conscious of their strength and self-mastery, and exultant in the thought of their high vocation, they shall grasp their trumpets and banners ; and, from out the valleys, and on the tops of the mountains, they shall lift up their voices together, bringing glad tidings, publishing peace, and saying unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.

# RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH.

# A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

## AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING IN BOSTON,

MAY 29, 1860.

BY REV. ANDREW L. STONE.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN & SON, 42 CONGRESS STREET.
1860.

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From Phi. Vol.

69350

A. J. Corsen

June 13, 1865

# DISCOURSE.

MATT. IX. 37.

THE LABORERS ARE FEW.

It is in the hope and faith of the Church that the time shall come when this Scripture shall be repeated no more. But that time is not yet. On all earnest lips, both in counsels and in prayers, these words still linger. Let one ascend some spiritual height of observation beneath which all the desolations of earth lie spread out, let him survey the broad harvest-field, stretching away in continental vastness, and gemming with island wealth the vaster oceans—all white unto the reaping time—and then look for the hands that are to gather in the countless sheaves, a reaper here and there, one perhaps for a thousand miles of border line, see the sickle thrust in upon some remote verge of the standing grain, while its magnificent equatorial interior, equally ready for the garner, lies silent and stirless in unbroken solitude, or visited at long intervals by explorers who come and go only to repeat after one another the comment, "This too is every whit ripe for harvesting," he could give emphasis to the utterance—"The laborers are few." This broad view is the one to take, the only one that is just and adequate. Surveying a section of the field, especially having our position where a busy group of reapers are almost struggling together for a few sheaves in the midst of them, it shall seem to us, perhaps, that the local supply outruns the demand; I say "*seems*," for any complete exploration of the home field, any fair summing up of the unevangelized at our doors, would still confirm the general conclusion that the work is too mighty for the few that have it in charge. But if that seeming were to pass for the truth, there would be but a languid response to any appeal, whether from human or divine lips, the burden of which should be, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he raise up and send into the field more laborers for his harvest."

And let us remember whose voice it is that speaks this plaintive testimony—the voice of One who came from the fields of glory into the harvest-field of earth, who came to spend strength and life beneath the heat and burden of the day, who entered in and toiled and reaped till that mortal faintness came upon him, and who, seeing his band of helpers so small, in grief and sadness complained —"*The laborers are few.*" The angels all worship and obey him—twelve legions would hasten at his softest word, to reap and bind at his side. But this is a work that only human hands can do. The sickle fits only a human grasp; Christ himself entered humanity as his outfit for such laboring, and men must be his fellow-laborers. Will the Church hear her Lord, let his sorrowing word rest on her heart, and for his sake make herself a nursing mother, giving unto him freely and fully and continuously her foster-children, until his heart is satisfied?

What then is her responsibility in this matter—*the responsibility of the Church in furnishing laborers to gather the harvest of her Lord?*

This responsibility begins farther back than we are accustomed to think. When a young preacher of the Gospel rises up before us, equipped for the ministry of the word, his mind tutored with careful discipline, his soul full of the love of Jesus, and beseeches us, 'Send me far hence from this Christian Jerusalem unto the Gentiles,' we feel that the time has come to act. Here's a laborer ready for the field. Here's something tangible and present; immediate fruitfulness invites our investments. Yes, but it is also our duty to create the laborer, so to speak, out of the raw material. A great work has been wrought by somebody when that laborer, accomplished for the toil, presents himself for our commission. A work of patient years, of large pecuniary outlay, and in this sense, of great self-sacrifice. Who has done this work? That is one question. And another is, to whom does this work belong? Do you say, it belongs to the candidate, to the youthful aspirant himself? Why does this part of the charges belong to him more than any other? Why isn't it as much his duty to go forth at his own charges, and to sustain himself at his own charges, as to prepare himself at his own charges? Why ought he not to take the whole upon his own cost, as well as a part? Are not the years of preparation as truly given to the work of the Lord, as the years that follow? Are they not a heavier burden upon private resources, because in this sense absolutely unproductive and unremunerative, than the later years? Is not this the time of all others when hope droops in the long struggle with penury, and doubt, and fear, and despondency, a gloomy triumvirate, usurp the dominion of the soul? Will this weary apprenticeship succeed? Will it not be cut short by early mortality? Will not some inevitable switch run this youthful and pious venture off the track? The sorest conflict, the deepest perplexity are in this portion of the career often. Must the youthful devotee fight these battles alone, and has he only on the strength of victory thus far, and success in getting ready for the start, a claim to be helped off? In furnishing and sending forth the conquering fleets of salvation, must every man build his own craft, and then is he entitled for the first time to ask assistance in launching it from the ways?

Practically, we often reason so, but I confess the philosophy of this claim is not clear to me. True, this earlier bounty would be given in uncertainty as to any returns—it would be subject to the liability of imposition from unscrupulous ambition, availing itself of a charitable start for its own schemes, and we might say that all professions and trades agree in exacting the outlay of preparatory years before they begin to give back the humblest rewards. Well, as to the uncertainty, our later bounties are equally in the dark, the ship deep freighted with the bread of life may founder on the lonely seas—we sow in faith only, whether earlier or later; the liability urged would be an argument for carefulness rather than abstinence, and the apprenticeship to business is every hour of it an investment for pecuniary returns and earthly fortunes; but in *this* service there are no golden prizes.

But pausing a little in this line of thought, retaining in mind now only so much as this, that the responsibility of the Church for this sacred supply begins farther back than the threshhold of the profession itself, let us signalize some of the parts of this responsibility.

1. How much, brethren, do we pray this divinely appointed

prayer I have quoted from the Redeemer's tongue: "O Lord of the harvest, raise up and send forth laborers into thy harvest!" We have an annual concert in respect to this specific supplication. Some more thoughtful and comprehensive petitioner will cross the track of it perhaps in the monthly missionary concert. But do we ministers mingle it distinctively with our Sabbath intercessions—do we church members feel and express the burden in our social prayer meetings? Do we heads of families pray it at the household altar, and in our children's hearing? Do we private Christians linger over and wrestle with it in the closet of evening and morning sacrifice? Does the Great Dispenser wait till his people become earnest and importunate, before he gives? Does our silence shut the windows of heaven, and hinder God's working as truly as though it shortened the arm of Omnipotence? Does the infinite compassion commune thus with its own yearnings, "O, that my people would inquire of me to do this thing for them"? And is the noticeable diversion of the streams of youthful piety, in this our day, into channels of worldly enterprise, monumental of the dearth of prayer in this one direction—intended to startle us into a recognition of our forgetfulness and neglect, and to open before us now this channel deep and wide for our soul's fullness? We have been praying much—so much prayer has never ascended from earth as within these two or three summers and winters gone—but it has been distinctively for the reviving presence of the Holy Ghost—distinctively for individual cases that seemed to challenge the utmost heroism of faith, and the utmost power of grace—distinctively for union and concord among all lovers of Christ and men. Have we forgotten a special call upon God, the very words of which have been framed to our using, and for the sound of which the ear of God has been aching? Come, brethren, we have this marvelous power to try, on this great interest—a power whose marvels never had such grand and blessed illustrations as in these very instant days. Lord, teach us to pray this prayer!

2. Again—how ready are we to give our own sons to this service of the Lord? Is it a thought which we keep steadily before their minds from their infant days, 'My child, you are God's—he owns you absolutely; see, your parents have recognized his claim, and given you up to him, to serve him as he needs you most.' Would we rather they should be successful traders, merchant princes, great

manufacturers, eminent counselors—than humble, rural ambassadors from God to man? A very eminent clergyman said to me not long since, "You know it was a coming down for me to enter the ministry. I had wealth, family, social standing, and brilliant worldly prospects." I told him simply that I could not agree with him in his estimate of the transition; that I thought the calling of the Christian minister was highest in honor and place of all earthly possibilities. Well, he seemed to think it was natural, perhaps, that that should be my view, and equally natural that the other should be his view. I believe I felt nauseated even to faintness. Is there much of that feeling with men of means in the Church? Do they think that it is well enough for poor boys, with no prospects, to study for the ministry, and that if they get a call to preach the Gospel in some backwoods settlement, upon a stipend which will just keep the wolf from the door, it is on the whole quite a success for them? Would it be to these parents a disappointment and a trial to have their own well-nurtured boys, to whom they can give so handsome an introduction into business life, and so splendid a start for a mercantile career, turn with their whole heart of choice, into this obscure path, and sink all worldly schemes and hopes in this lowly venture? Do they labor diligently to secure in these young hearts this choice, so unattractive to a worldly eye? Do they seek to animate these youthful souls with a noble ambition, and a heroic ardor to be banner-bearers for the Captain of our Salvation, at the rude and perilous outposts of the conquering kingdom? Do they fill them with exalted ideas of the grandeur and dignity of the office of a messenger of truth and peace to their lost fellow-men, whether in cities or in the wilderness, or amid the darkness and degradation of heathen night—of its proper and tender benevolence—of its Christ-likeness, and of its unspeakably precious rewards and joys here and hereafter?

Or do they rather furnish facilities, in a quiet way, for the realization of a worldly ambition—shape the training for a vigorous and athletic rivalry amid earthly competitions, and gladly open doors to these young feet into the thronged arena where the prizes of this life are won? I don't believe in forcing or crowding even our pious sons into the Christian ministry. No man will be happy or useful there who goes in by such constraint, and is perpetually regretting his decision. No man whose heart is not in it, who does not count it a priceless privilege to have the good news to publish, and the training of men for immortal destinies in his hand, ought for one moment to attempt its functions; but it will be impossible for us to conceal our real sentiments from the sharp inspection of young eyes in the home; and though it is not certain, that if the deepest longing of our souls should be that God would honor us and our offspring by making them heralds of his grace, their choices will centre upon this calling; it will be very strange, on the other hand, if our real preference for a money-making business career for our children should not draw powerfully their choices and tastes into the same channel. Down in the honest desires of our hearts on this subject, what is the honest truth? Who shall consecrate their children to this sacred work, if Christian parents will not? What is distinctive of a Christian parent? Not to love his boy with an undying pulse of affection—to wish him a high and honorable career in life—to hold him back from vice and crime—to equip him for virtuous and manly action in his day and generation. There is many a worldly parent who comes up to the full measure of such a solicitude as this. It is distinctive of a Christian in such a relation, to look upon his child as belonging to Christ, to dedicate him to Christ, to train him up for Christ, to give him away to any service of Christ, whose demands are most urgent; to borrow the words of Hannah over the young Samuel: "Therefore he shall be lent to the Lord; as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord."

And who can so greatly relieve the Church and the associations having her movements in charge, as the men whose worldly position is such that they can sustain the burden of equipping their own sons for this exalted service. I am not saying that there is not need for Christian merchants, that there is no sphere for glorifying God and helping men in the walks of gainful industry—but what a blessing it were for every Christian household to give one son, at least, to swell the ranks of that little company that declare the word, and to wear the crown at last which shall be placed on the brow of him who turneth many to righteousness!

3. And then we may help those who desire to enter the vineyard as such laborers, but have not the means to make themselves ready. If they will give themselves, they do in that give their all. If they give themselves, their mind, their strength, their toil, it is not

*unreasonable* that the Church should furnish the rest. Take a young lad as he graduates from our common school system, with the education with which most persons of their age feel that they are competent to begin to try their hand at the initial processes of some remunerative life-work. The unreturning outlay upon them perhaps pauses there. From that threshold of resolve they have strength and wit to earn at least their daily bread. Their nimble feet and unquestioning obedience and alacrity make them perhaps even more desirable helpers in many walks of business than older candidates. So they are fairly ready, at the age of fourteen or sixteen, to be launched. Lay now a hand of arrest upon one of them. Say to him, 'You cannot begin now to strike a stroke for yourself—you must give yet a couple of years to elementary classical studies—then four years more to a collegiate course—then three years additional to professional study, and so enter the ministry and serve God at the altar.' You exact from him thus eight or nine years of totally unproductive labor, in the pecuniary sense—through all of which he must be fed, clothed, lodged, transported from place to place, furnished with books, and lights, and warm rooms, and all the facilities for study, and yet cannot earn, except at the expense of diversion from his purpose and the outlay of more time upon it, one penny to pay his way. These nine years would have laid up for him in a business career, quite a little business capital—they would have delivered him from the oppressive sense of dependence—they would have possessed him all along with the ennobling consciousness that all he need ask of earth or heaven in his daily tasks is health and a providential blessing—they would have given him the great blessing of extending, instead of a suppliant hand, a hand of bounty to his near and dear kindred—they would perhaps have crowned his youthful hopes and affections with domestic ties, and have opened his proud and happy eyes upon a home of his own. We say to him no; take these most telling and productive years—the years that form business habits, and educate in business principles—and that bring in with every annual revolution a larger income, and establish a young man in the confidence of the community, and make his place—give up these years, for no present revenue, for no promise of future enriching, to a course of study arduous and exhausting in itself, and making you a burden upon kindred and home—a dependent upon some hand other than your own for the least want of every day. If this far heavier tax of preparation insured a corresponding increase of golden returns, if one could draw upon this bank of future earnings for these unfruitful, dependent years, the case were different. Suppose the young man say, 'It is as reasonable for me to consider how I can provide for myself, how I can support a family, how I can contribute to the comfort of my aged parents, as for any other man,' we may find it hard to convince him to the contrary. Suppose he ask definitely, 'What is the financial view of the case? My whole life up to twenty-five years devoted as the cost of my professional acquirements, when I commence my professional work what worldly compensation is to be expected?' We may tell him, that he will perhaps receive what a good serviceable porter in a wholesale establishment gets—rather less than a tolerably acute salesman and drummer—that the average salary of book-keepers will be above his—two or three hundred dollars—that an exchange of incomes with railway conductors and station agents would be very likely to his advantage. Financially, the prospect is not winning. Now, we have no right to urge, 'But, my dear sir, you must be self-sacrificing in this—you must not think of earthly gain and worldly honor—you must look for your reward hereafter—you must feast on spiritual luxuries.' Why must *he* do this, and not we; why must he give his years, and then his ripened toil, while we from the outset may gather in our golden harvests and fill our garners. It may be a worldly sensation to be hungry when high noon comes, and to feel the chill of last week's cold storm, but our most eloquent rebukes will hardly overcome this natural depravity in one who cannot give an hour to earning for himself. Is it unreasonable that we should divide the burden with him—that we should sustain him with bread while he gives life—that we should relieve the impoverished and struggling household whose little all is drained into this one unreturning channel? Shall we call it charity to adjust this equitable division? Shall we stigmatize this religious devotee as a charity student, and scrutinize carefully the color of his loaf and the quality of his broadcloth? Which gives most, and which receives most, *he* or the *Church*? Is the life more than meat? Are body and soul more than raiment? Is he eating the bread of charity in earthly things, or are we fed by his charity in spiritual things? We ought to blush to a deeper crimson than guilt and shame ever wore, to suffer the thought to come into our hearts, and hasten to atone for such meanness and selfishness, by paying, to the last farthing of our capability, this our just and righteous debt.

There are others, too, to be thought of in this matter of debt, than the young men themselves. Who are these young men of small means, and what are their alliances in life? They are the only stay and staff of poor widows, whose loving heart gives them to Christ, and who will wear their fingers to the quick, rather than break in upon this sacred purpose; they are the sons of country clergymen, who covet successors to wear their mantle in the good work that has tried their faith so often as to earthly supplies; they are the children of well-to-do farmers and manufacturers, who have a name in the Church, but have no idea of squandering a hundred or two of dollars annually for a term of years, to bring up a boy with white hands, and good for nothing to work; they are members of a large circle of brothers and sisters in the same home, and they feel that it is not honorable or right to divert to themselves, while they give nothing back, and never can give anything back, the means needed for others there quite as much, who will soon repay in kind the outlay upon them; they are conscientious, affectionate boys, who long to serve Christ in the preaching of his Gospel, and yet would fain give their toil to comfort the declining days of aged parents whose strength to toil is almost spent. They are themselves souls filled with the love of Jesus and the love of men, who count it a joy above all joys to lead rescued and ransomed sinners home to glory. We [I speak in the name of the ministry, in the name of the churches, in the name of the men of wealth] can meet this sacred longing.

The saddest sentence in that Report, some few fragments of which were presented by the Secretary, was this—"The burden comes upon the young men." It is a brief sentence, easily pronounced, heard by us perhaps with calm pulses. But if we could pass out through the colleges where our beneficiaries are straining on, beneath all the pressure they can now sustain, and through Christian homes, where the eyes of many a young aspirant look out longing and waiting to open upon the work of the harvest-field—if we could see that burden impinge upon the strained and tortured sensibilities, and their hearts droop under its weight, there would be another echo to it. Ought the burden to fall there, upon the young men? Ought it not to come upon us? It is ours to raise it, and bear it on. Oh let us take hold with all our willing hands, and lift it from off those spirits, which are crushed by it to earth!

We can help answer the widow's prayer, we can relieve these strained sentiments of honor, we can build avenues out of the humble but refined and cultivated rural homes into the high places of the field, for these emulous laborers. The Church asks this generous office at our hands—the world, perishing in its great white harvest-field, asks it—the multiplying graves of the fathers in the ministry falling asleep, ask it. He asks it who says in tender reproach, "*The laborers are few.*"

# DUTY OF THE CHURCH.

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A

# DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

## AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING IN BOSTON,

MAY 27, 1862.

BY REV. EDWIN B. WEBB.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN & SON, 42 CONGRESS STREET.
1862.

69350

A. J. Corsen

June 13, 1865.

# DISCOURSE.

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## 1 TIMOTHY III. 15.

WHICH IS THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH.

TIMOTHY had been left at Ephesus,—the chief city of Ionia, and the ornament of Asia,—counseled and charged to devote himself to the interests of the church there; to complete its organization; to fix the terms of its membership and ministry; to provide for its government, and perpetuate its growth. This was a local work. But Paul, in his anxiety to impress upon Timothy, his own son in the faith, the importance of perfectly fulfilling his sacred trust, urges a truth of vast moment in all places, and at all times,—*the church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth.*

*The church* is not the Jewish church, nor the Romish church, nor the English church, nor any other such body, however named. *The* church is that great body of believers of which Christ is the head—a peculiar people, indeed, but peculiar in this, that they have been purified, and vitalized, "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,"—"a people zealous of good works, who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Rising above fractional elements, and denominational distinctions, *the* church is thus large and inclusive.

But "the church of the living God" is also exclusive. Foundations, that are laid to endure, are composed of rock, pure and simple; not part rock and part sand; not part perishable and part permanent. And so the church, which is the foundation, "the pillar and ground of the truth," cannot be composed of flesh and spirit—of a mixture of the corruptible and the incorruptible. It must exclude all that is not life and spirit. How else prevent corruption, decay and death ?

"*The truth*" of our text we take to be the peculiar, distinguishing facts and doctrines of the gospel—"the mystery of godliness" proclaimed in the next verse—"God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." And "the truth"—to give a fair but free interpretation of our text—"the truth," or the gospel of Jesus Christ, is to be upheld, maintained and supported, always and everywhere. Christ died not for a nation, but for the world. The announcement of the angel is not a Saviour for a particular locality, or a favored age, but "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all people*." Other religions may wane, and disappear ; the religion of the cross shall grow, and brighten till the end. Other kingdoms, with their philosophies and philanthropies, shall crumble and perish ; the kingdom of Heaven shall yet embrace all the kingdoms of the earth. But it is not so much to the spread or support of the truth, that we would call attention just now, as to the agent or body with whom rests the responsibility of this work.

By whom is the truth to be established, lifted up, and supported ? God has blessed the world with three institutions—the family, civil government, and the church. And to each he has assigned a specific work—to the family, the rearing of a seed to serve him ; to government, the control of men in their social relations ; and to the church, the work of introducing, and sustaining the truths of redemption all over the world. This is her responsibility. The truth has been received from Christ, the head, *by the church*, and she must preserve it unchanged, and uncorrupted. The gospel has been intrusted to the care of *the church*, and she must guard it against the open assaults of enemies ; against the undermining influences of error. The salvation of Christ is for all men, in all quarters of the earth, in all coming time ; and *upon the church* rests the responsibility of publishing and perpetuating the truth of this salvation, perfect and entire.

If now we look steadily, and with a practical eye, to the work of the church, it divides itself into three grand departments—the department of Home Evangelization, or that of the local church—the department of Home Missions—and the department of Foreign Missions. Turning back to the organization and acts of the first Christian church, we know that when the living promise of the Master came upon them, loosing their tongues, and empowering their speech, they all preached and prayed—"Peter and the rest." They filled Jerusalem, their native city, with the doctrines of Christ. This was the accusation made against them; and this is a glorious testimony to their faith and fidelity in the work at home. But further than this, some were to go out and preach to the circumcision—a home missionary work. And others, chosen and ordained for this very end, were "to go far hence to the Gentiles"—a grand foreign missionary work, and the complement of other Christian labors.

And such must be the aim of the church in all time. We have spoken of three departments, and yet there is really but one, and one work. Suppose that this morning's light had dawned upon no church in Massachusetts—upon no church in this whole country—upon no church in the world. To-day one is planted in Boston—an earnest, living church, filled with the Holy Ghost and sympathy with Jesus. Now, what must be the aim and effort of this solitary church? Manifestly, first of all, to evangelize the inhabitants of this city. Andrew having heard the gushing testimony and exclamation of John —"he first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus"—first found and brought his own brother to Christ, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And that is the beautiful example after which every brother, and sister, and neighbor, and citizen, and church should work. And every member thus working, the whole city, from its centre to its circumference, would be reached and evangelized.

But this principle, once adopted, would not allow the supposed solitary church to stop with this city. She has a torch, and she must press on, and out, and kindle other torches beyond. She has the bread of life, and she is impelled by the grace of God to communicate to those without who are perishing. And she will. Animated by the gifts of the gospel, and by the example of the Saviour, this church will select from her own number men who show themselves possessed of the requisite ability and experience, and send them forward to plant other churches in the adjoining cities, towns and states. The church thus planted, and each new church thus repeating the example of the mother church, like the banyan tree, whose branches, as they stretch out towards the horizon on every side, strike down, and touching the earth, become each a new tree, which in turn, and in like manner, reaches out, and roots, and reproduces itself, till one becomes a forest, filling the plain, and offering, beneath its arches, shelter and rest and refreshment to the weary and famishing,—each new church, we say, thus repeating itself, would gradually fill the field, which is the world, with that tree whose leaves and fruit are for the healing and life of the nations. How manifest is the truth of our text —how quickly do we see that all rests upon the church—that she must advance, make known, and maintain the truth.

And just here, speaking for no one but myself, let me suggest whether we are not in danger of losing sight of the divine commission, prerogatives and completeness of the Christian church? Like the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, the church is yet to fill the earth. She is an "eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." The light of her glory shall eclipse all brightness, so that the prophet may say to those that dwell in her, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." But has there not been a tendency to ignore the divine appointment and legitimate function of the church? So that we have been creating societies which, if they do not oppose, practically rival the church that feeds and upholds them. There is something here that is open to objection—something that should engage the thought of our wisest men.

But there is *one* thing that the church *must do*—and about this there can be no difference of opinion—she must provide herself, and the world, with a ministry. However she may divide, or delegate her work, the pulpit must be a centre of life and power in every department. Whatever else she may dispense with, she can never dispense with the *preaching* of the gospel. Some kind of ministry is absolutely essential to the maintenance of the truth. And the better the ministry, the more thoroughly educated, equipped and drilled, the more powerful and prosperous the church. This is a point that need not be argued. We may as well argue whether the army shall have officers, as whether the church militant shall have ministers. But the all-important, though a plain and practical question, is this. Where are the men for this service? Are they forthcoming spontaneously? No. True, as is objected sometimes, there are more men in the ministry than preach. But there are lawyers and physicians, more than practice; and titled soldiers, more than serve their country. The men who enter the sacred calling are imperfect and changeable, like other men. And though there might be a number of ministers equal to the number of pulpits in the land, if for any reason these pulpits are not occupied, other men must be found to fill the vacancies, and do the work. Besides, new fields are constantly opening, and calling with more than voice and vision for new men; new fields in every part of the world, at home and abroad. Here and there, at some favored centre, there may be more ministers than are needed. But if you will lift up your eye, from a denominational stand-point, and take in only the whole of New England, considering the average numbers of those who die, and those who fail, and those who go out into other callings and other denominations, only about two-thirds of the number annually requisite are forthcoming.

But the church is not to establish and maintain the truth in New England alone, but in every land under the sun. Lift up your eyes, and look all abroad on the vastness of her work. The tide of emigration is overflowing all the boundaries of human habitation, rising above hills and high mountains, and spreading out beyond the wilderness into new states, kingdoms and empires. Commerce is sailing her ships in every sea and river; enterprise is building warehouses on every shore, and linking the interior to the coast by rail-roads, whose stations and termini mark centres within whose circumference vast multitudes must live and die. There are associations, companies and individuals sending out their agents with every commodity and conceivable thing that can meet the legitimate wants, or pamper the passions, or gratify the lusts of men, civilized or savage. But there is an enterprise, intrusted to the love and fidelity of the church, divine and glorious above all that commerce ever embarked in, looking to results grander than the schemes of ambition, or the conquests of armies—the work of establishing and maintaining everywhere "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." And the world is open to its coming—all ports, all lands, and the islands of the sea, are waiting for it. Enough has been already accomplished, to reveal its beneficence and power. "It found the tribes of Europe sitting at a feast of human flesh, and it called them away from the horrid repast, and extinguished their unholy fires." It has found many a tribe with its life going out, and has gathered together, and rekindled, and replenished its waning fires. It has filled many lands with the beautiful light of asylums for the blind, and hospitals for the sick. It has taken woman from her degradation, and placed her by the side of man, to equal and elevate him. It has liberated the slave—it has mitigated the horrors of war. Yes, even now, and in our own country, Christian men, with all their love for laws and compacts, and with all their prejudice against color, cannot say to the poor black slave, as, from the plantation where he has served in chains, he comes with tokens of confidence, or from scenes of sorrow and places of secret prayer, to meet our advancing lines with words of blessing—we say, Christian men can't find it in their hearts to say, "Go back"—"back with you to your bondage." And if this gospel, with her spiritual armor, cannot protect the bodies of our brave volunteers, she can carry a Saviour, dearer than the flag of our country, upon the battle-field—she can strew the camps with books and Bibles, like the leaves which are for the healing of the nations—she can kneel, in the person of a godly chaplain, or some loving disciple, by the low couch where life ebbs away in the crimson tide, and steady the look of a dying soldier as he fixes his closing eye on the cross of Christ.

But the blessings experienced, as yet, are but a foretaste of what is to come. The land already possessed, is only the borders of what is to be subdued to Messias, our King. The fruit gathered is but the first ripe ears of a golden harvest. "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish, like grass of the earth." Yes, it shall be—it is not yet.

Now shall the church try, with plan and purpose, to carry forward its peerless and sublime enterprise? Shall she stand up and meet the responsibility which God has laid upon her, and give this gospel, full of blessings as the sun is of light, to all people? Then she must call out, and collect, and prepare, and send forth her men—a devoted, able, educated ministry. This is the first thing to be done, and she, *the church*, must do it.

It is true, doubtless, in some instances, that God calls and qualifies men to do a special and glorious work. But is the church, therefore, to neglect practical foresight, and provident calculation, and reclining at her ease, call it 'trust in divine Providence?' Or are we safe in the conclusion, the church having been organized to do a specific work—a glorious, world-wide work—that she is guiltless though the work remain undone? Is she to wait now for God to call Cyrus by name, and Samuel, with an audible voice, and give them, each, a mission and message from Heaven to the world—is she to wait for tongues of flame, and miraculous gifts, to indicate the men whom He would employ? And when no man is thus designated and commissioned, shall we conclude that no man is needed, and that the work may innocently wait? Or because God gives some young men such an intense love for the ministry, and such an indomitable will, that no difficulties can impede them, and no obstacles defeat their success, shall we conclude that they only are to have a place in the vineyard of the Lord? Columbus may be a pioneer—a man called to stand before kings and queens, a man with a purpose above defeat—

but is he the only one to navigate the seas, and make conquests in the new world? Possibly here and there a man may produce the creations of art, unschooled, unhelped, but most painters and sculptors are sought out, and nurtured and bred to their work. The truth is, the church has been guilty of a secret theory, and an open practice, in this matter, which cannot be defended. God has made her the builder of his earthly kingdom, has designated her work—'Go, preach the gospel to every creature'—and she, just as if God had done no such thing, has been found too often waiting, apparently, his miraculous interposition. It is her duty to find the men to execute her divine commission, and to elect and withdraw them from other pursuits, and put them into the ministry, educating them for their work. Doubtless she has sinned sometimes under the dash of impulse, or through unwillingness to give sharp advice, and seized upon some who were unfit and inadequate to her commission. But more often has she sinned in not discerning and setting apart those whom God has endowed, and converted to her hand.

It is seldom that a young man of real ability and devotion, knows himself. The very men who would succeed in the ministry, have too much power, and too much cheerful application, and too much conscience not to succeed elsewhere. And hence the church should be constantly, and discriminately watchful, and ready to secure and support those who evince ability to do her work.

There are young men now—some in the city, more in the country, I think, along the valleys and "in the hill country" of New England—young men consecrated from their birth by praying mothers, and baptized first with their tears, with hearts renewed by the Holy Ghost, with intellects clear and honest as the light and air in which they live, with habits of industry and economy inherited from a Christian ancestry, with sympathies tuned by the hand of nature to the music of winds and waterfalls, with imaginations quickened in the solitude of the wilderness, and impressed with the imagery of Scripture,—young men coarsely clad, and plainly fed like John the Baptist, and like him reverent towards their superiors, but fearless of obstacles, and of dangers, ready, if enlisted and disciplined by the church, to cry with a strong voice, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.' The church is wise if she secure the services of these men, and educate them. She must have greater numbers, or fall more and more behind in her duty.

We say, *educate them.* For it is a great mistake to expect that these young men, when found, will show themselves fitted either by nature, or by the providence of God, for the place they are to occupy, or for the work they are to do. God created the rocks, but they must be hewn and shaped before they can go into the foundations. God made the iron in the hills, but it must go through the furnace and through the forge, before it is fit for use. Or, for a closer analogy, take our military school at West Point. All honor to the noble volunteers who sprang, by hundreds of thousands, to arms at their country's call. But in making an efficient, available, successful army—one that may be moved and massed without confusion, and concentrated without mistake—something more than strong hands and willing hearts is necessary. Though some of those trained there have proved traitors to their country, yet we all prize that military school, and appreciate as never before the education, the science, the discipline, the confidence, the spirit acquired in its course. And is it not equally wise for the church, having picked her men with care and scrutiny, to give them a perfectly thorough, scientific and practical education? If there ever was a time when the church needed men vitalized by the doctrines of the cross, and at the same time skilled in all the philosophy of the world, she needs them now.

There is danger that the very elect be deceived and fall. So many are the temptations under the head of literature, such the competition in business, such the prize of ambition, and so exciting the events and topics of the day, that *spirituality*, which arises from an engrossing contemplation of the gospel, is almost lost sight of. And hence the church needs men, converted like Paul, and learned like Paul, who, out of a deep and loving conviction of its immeasurable and everlasting worth, 'glory in nothing save in the cross of Jesus Christ.' But thus to appreciate the gospel, they must not be ignorant.

And then, arising in part from causes which produce a want of spirituality, and also from the multitude of ethical topics which have a place in the pulpit, but which for evident reasons have become very prominent, there is a miserable, starveling tendency to touch only the surface and outer edges of essential Christianity. Now we need men who, starting from the point where, in meridian brightness, the sun of glory shines, and following down the line of his vertical rays, know how to sink a deep shaft into the secret consciousness of individual experience, so that men, from a knowledge of themselves, may know that their primary, paramount want is the righteousness of Christ, and the regeneration of the Holy Ghost. There is many a Christian to-day, who really thinks that the power of preaching depends on the striking incident and adventure which are woven into the sermon. That the simple, unadorned truths of the gospel—"when unadorned, adorned the most"—have power to stir the very depths of human consciousness, and sway and bind the feelings, is a new idea to him. That all these ethical and moral topics, and theories of reform, must have their root in Christian doctrines, to abide and bring forth fruit, is a fact which he has yet to learn. He thinks he wants something else besides the few and familiar truths of a scriptural orthodoxy. Now the church needs to raise up men taught by the Holy Ghost first, and then taught in the schools till they can show that all the deepest wants of our fallen nature are more than met by the deep things of the gospel, and that the interest of a sermon, and the profit of a people, depend not upon the extent and variety of surface gone over, but upon the depths of the heart and the gospel consciously reached.

And then, further, no age ever had a more specious and subtle infidelity to contend with. Some persons claiming an advanced position in the church, and using largely the Christian dialect, attack the very foundations of Christianity. If they can be said to preach, it is "with excellency of speech," and "with enticing words of man's wisdom." They eliminate from the Gospel the very elements of its power. With much apparent interest in Christ, they abhor the crimson doctrines which his death teaches, and preach the resurrection "as an idea," and not as a reality. With much pleasing analogy they remove all necessity for miracles, and all need of inspiration. They preach the nativity, the life—they preach the humanities of Jesus, but the divinity is left concealed in the shadows of doubt ; in learned and speculative darkness. The church must have men so learned in the knowledge of the schools, that from the painful and blighting effects of darkness they can demonstrate the existence of light, and from the direction of the shadows point out and proclaim the sun.

Then there are others who openly deny the doctrines of redemption, and proudly denounce the church from the pulpit. By their boldness they awaken curiosity, and excite a certain kind of admiration ; while by the many good things in their discourses they conciliate popular favor, and prepare the way for the progress of error. Ignoring a personal God, they preach a pleasant mystic naturalism—denying a revealed religion, they preach a natural religion so plain and perfect that nothing more seems necessary, giving to nature what is really stolen from revelation—sneering at evangelical piety, they exalt the immutable principles of morality, justice, truth, honor and virtue—ridiculing revivals, they throw their strength into the advancement of all social reforms. The old rusty weapons of a vulgar infidelity are exchanged for that strategy which depresses revelation by exalting nature—which excludes a vital Christianity by pushing forward the claims of law, and the blessings of temperance, chastity, generosity and good-will. In a word, morality is made a substitute for religion, and reason a substitute for revelation, and nature a substitute for Deity.

And then we have writers *many*, essayists and reviewers, who plant batteries on the heights of science from which to bombard and reduce the Bible—from which to dispute all advance and possibility of supernatural operations. There are some small men too, who, climbing into the abandoned forts of a former generation, and without the ability to judge really of the strength of the works, or the worth of their armament, but feeling confident and secure in a new place, make themselves merry behind the Quaker guns which covered their fathers' retreat. Such are they who, in science and philosophy, reproduce the defunct arguments, and re-man the silenced theories of past conflicts.

Then there are still others, who, like Buckle, with great ingenuity and ability, and after full reading and research, attempt to eliminate from the world's best civilization all presence and influence of evangelical religion.

Now if the church is to be the pillar and ground, the supporter, defender and propagator of the truth, she must educate her ministers—educate them so thoroughly that they can traverse with a certain and steady step the whole ground of controversy. Acknowledging at once the immutability of moral distinctions, and the eternal and unavoidable claims of the law, they must show also the necessity of the gospel. They must themselves understand, and be able to make men see, that all sound morality rests upon evangelical Christianity; that all real and abiding reforms are the natural fruit of this tree of life; and that the man who cripples the doctrines of inspiration, sin, atonement, cripples the *progress* and *life* of the race; and the man who clouds the relation of the sinner to his Saviour—Christ crucified—clouds the hope and darkens the prospect of the dying. The church must have a ministry that can adjust the principles of the gospel to the consciousness of the sinner; that can master infidel publications, meeting them on their own ground; that can thoroughly dissect any thing in their department, discern and acknowledge what is true, reject and disprove what is false. In these new times, with new questions to discuss and determine, with old truths, a thousand times more forceful because of some new and manifest application, with new allies in science, in philosophy, in history, to welcome; with new enemies, changeful, deceitful, determined, to meet, the Christian minister will need more and more a thorough schooling, an enlarged comprehension, and all the strength and facilities which the best teachers, the amplest libraries, and fullest years, can give. All, of course, will not attain to this standard. But to aim at anything else, is to show an utter want of appreciation of the nature and design of the gospel, and ourselves unworthy of the trust committed to our hands.

If not out of a happy experience, and consciousness of the requisite education for such work as the church calls her ministers to perform, yet certainly out of a bitter sense of want—out of painful embarrassment and conscious weakness I can speak; and I would urge it earnestly upon the churches, select your young men early, as soon as they show intelligent love and capacity for the service; do not pamper them, but do not let them starve; give them long, unembarrassed, unbroken years of study in the schools, and press ever upon them, as a motive to the most extensive, opulent and thorough attainments, the cause for which Christ died—the cause of human salvation.

The Education Society has assisted one-third of the existing ministry of our denomination in New England—one-half of our home missionaries, and two-thirds of those who have gone to the heathen. With these facts of the past before you, look to the future, its opening fields, its growing wants, and say, Must not this Society be liberally sustained?

The Want and the Source of Supply.

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A

# DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

# AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING IN BOSTON,

MAY 26, 1863.

BY REV. EDWIN JOHNSON.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN & SON, 42 CONGRESS STREET.
1863.

From

69350

A. J. Cosen.

June 13, 1865

# DISCOURSE.

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MATTHEW ix. 37.

THE HARVEST TRULY IS PLENTEOUS, BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW.

Since our Saviour thus spake, have the facts altered so as to render the injunction which he based upon them no longer binding nor appropriate?

As we look back to the beginning of Christianity and abroad upon the present face of human affairs, we have indeed reason to rejoice that all is not a scene of destitution. The Lord of the harvest hath, in answer to prayer, sent forth many laborers into his harvest. From those same "acres over which walked the blessed feet which, for our sake, were nailed to the accursed tree," and from many other parts of the great field, golden sheaves have been gathered. Listen at points not a few of the wide area, and you shall hear the sound of 'the sickles keen,' the voice of the laborers plaintive under the heat and burden of the day, or jubilant as they shout the harvest home.

But there is another view which a spirit in us at all akin to the Son of Man will surely reveal to us. Our world still staggers under its weight of woe. Our race is still encumbered with the dire inheritance of sin. A glance at the surface of life, in our immediate vicinage, may reveal the sparkle of joy or the smooth current of peace; but beneath, deep and dark, runs the undertone of sorrow and of care. What a congregation of the poor, the crippled, the sick, the bereaved, the friendless, the disappointed and wretched—candidates all for the offices of Christian love—might be gathered from within a mile's circuit of where we are sitting, making this place a Bethesda. And yet here, with more reason than almost anywhere else, might one say is the focus of Christian civilization; here, in the metropolis of New England, see the ripest fruit of a culture that is yet to give unto our earth for a paradise lost a paradise regained. Gather in from this circuit the victims of ignorance and vice. Call an assembly of such as are offered for bread, a stone; for a faith that might warm and nourish the soul, a cold, unsatisfying system, or a system that enslaves to dead ceremonies and domineering men. Truly, here is a harvest growing up to our very doors. Thank God the laborers are not wholly wanting; yet what faithful laborer does not mourn that even here there is loss for lack of numbers who, with a truly Christian zeal and with the faith that moves mountains of pride and prejudice away, should improve the opportunities for doing good?

But look from narrow limits across the nation—its States and territories stretching from the eastern to the western sea. Rome, when that name represented the world, covered no more space; and this space, with a rapidity unseen elsewhere, is becoming peopled. As if to facilitate the Redeemer's last command, the world is coming to us. From regions more numerous than those that were represented at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, the course of emigration is bringing multitudes hither. For what purpose, but that they may receive the Holy Ghost and speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God? carrying back, it may be, to their native shores, the glad news they have heard. We require a large army of recruits in Christian service, to meet the increase that comes from year to year, like a flood, setting in upon our commercial and manufacturing towns, and rolling, wave after wave, into the great valley of the West. Even civil war has not raised an effectual blockade against the tide. Neither taxes nor the draft have been able, by their friction, to stay the wheels of migration to the New World. Nor let it be said that our former visions of a vast empire upon these shores, inviting and demanding Christian labor, were day-dreams that have been dashed away by the events of these last two years, and our calculations, based upon the previous history, turned to confusion.

On the one hand, the war, in its very progress, has developed a new and most inviting department for Christian toil; or rather, many such. As it has multiplied sorrows, sickness, wounds, privations, bereavements—so it has multiplied appeals to the ministry of mercy and consolation. Battle-fields, hospitals and desolated homes have quickened the heart-beats of humanity, and furnished ready work for willing hands. Besides, among the myriads of men whom the Republic employs to guard her life and to restore her state, an opportunity most precious is afforded for the preaching of the Gospel.

It was my privilege, lately, to spend a little season in this labor, among the forts and hospitals and barracks in and about Washington, and among the camps, lying like so many hamlets of white cottages, on the hills and in the valleys along the hither side of the Rappahannock. If one would get a taste of evangelical labor that will refresh his spirit and reinvigorate his faith, let him follow where self-denying chaplains have gone; and where, for a briefer service, many pastors and students—representing, you may be sure, in large ratio of numbers, this Society—have aided and supplemented the chaplains' work. Some conventionalities to which he has been accustomed he will in that service forego. But by so much as he finds sanitary and more strictly sacred service mingling in his mission, by so much as he finds preaching a plain, direct address to men concerning practical religious truth—delivered in the tent, in the house, or in the open camp—will he feel that he is carried back to the primitive days of Christianity. Meanwhile, the gratitude exhibited for kindness, the ready and tender attention given to the words of truth spoken, and the eager, almost greedy grasping for the printed page of religious instruction, will prompt him to glorify God that even the rude and cruel hand of war has led the way to opportunities and demands such as rarely, if ever before, were presented.

Think, again, what a field for philanthropic, Christian effort is opening in the fact that hundreds are daily thrown upon the hands of our nation, for support and care and instruction, who till now were prisoners, and secluded from all but such kindness and teaching as haply their masters might yield them.

But these present results are eclipsed by the prospect which is fast emerging from the mist into the clear light. What if the war is going to beat down the barriers to the progress of the truth, as other wars have, by an over-ruling Providence, been made to do? Higher than the Chinese wall, firmer than Mohammedan intolerance, has been the breakwater which slavery in our Southern States has opposed to the free course of the Gospel of liberty and love. By delays and defeats that seemed disastrous, as well as by victories, it has come to pass that now the tremendous enginery of military power is employed on the part of the loyal nation in pushing down that barrier, and adding thereby to the domain of home missionary labor a region of immense extent. Stout though the resistance may be, we feel that it must be vain. The triple wall is pierced at many points already, and the tide that returns not, but makes for itself a wider and wider channel, is running through. Soon—our hopes tell us, our faith in God tells us, the growing signs tell us—the whole hateful structure shall fall, amid the hallelujahs of the host that serve God in heaven and on earth. It is full time that a corps of young men were in process of training, with reference to this new field of Christian enterprise. The harvest ripens! Let the reapers be ready!

But look abroad, to the northern and southern quarters of our hemisphere—the latter, especially, claiming each year more and more notice. Look to the isles that cluster, like constellations, in the sea. And beyond, to the thronged plains of Asia, to the coasts and recesses of Africa, to the Papal and Mohammedan nations of Europe. It is not alone true that, as regards extent of space and numerical magnitude, the field has visibly and immensely enlarged since our Saviour said, "The harvest is plenteous!" We can all remember when, though the field was known to exist, a great part of it was inaccessible. China lay locked in a guarded slumber. Japan was almost as isolated and unknown as an outside planet. India opposed to the ingress of truth her bigoted and cruel paganism, and a civilized system of rapacity more jealous than that. Turkey was the synonym for rigid intolerance. Africa was represented on the map by a narrow rim of states, partially known, by a wide dotted space, north of the equator, marked *Sahara*, and by a wide blank below designated, "The Unexplored Region." It is so no longer. The Crimean war left Turkey at the feet of Christendom, almost as free for the spread of truth as any land had been before. India, after the quieting of the waves of war, invited the ship of Jesus to launch for a more uninterrupted and prosperous voyage upon the ocean of her multitudinous life. Barth, on the north, and Livingstone, on the south, have explored Africa from shore to shore, marking cities in place of arid sands, rivers and tribes in place of the void and parched wilderness. Recent treaties have laid prostrate the last defenses of China against Christianity, and have opened Japan almost at the same moment to commerce and to truth.

As when the autumn wind is rising, we hear it rustling the forest leaves and the bearded grain, till the myriad murmurs mingle in a roar like the waves upon the beach, so have we heard the Macedonian cry swelled by the separate voices of continents, islands, empires, states, cities and men, till the air is filled with it — 'the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters and of mighty thunderings.'

Does any one doubt the power and adaptation of Christian truth and Christian labor to the varied wants of the varied conditions of mankind? Not if he knows, in himself, the nature of the Gospel. Not, surely, if he has marked the development of Christianity in history, from the first day till now, seeing its ministries of mercy to the poor and sorrowing sons of men, seeing its power to turn the wilderness into a garden, to enlighten and liberalize the mind, to change the savage nature to the gentleness and docility of childhood, to nourish the heroism of action and of suffering, to dissipate the fear of death, to break down the dividing walls of caste and nationality and custom, making the whole world kin. Upon such a one, the arguments of that philosophy that would make the world's want something else than the religion of Jesus Christ, are lost. In the face of them, he cries with Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Nor let it be said that the world is not disposed to receive the truth as it is in Jesus. In all times, and in every community, are some who will not believe; but where does any earnest worker go forth weeping, and bearing precious seed, that he does not return again joyful, bringing his sheaves with him? I do not believe the popular faith in Christian truth was ever more firm, nor the popular mind more ready to receive that truth. Where the Word is preached, not as a barren system of metaphysics, nor as a piece of refined rhetoric, but as it came in glowing, loving life, from the lips of the Saviour and his Apostles, hearers are not wanting. The avidity with which volumes of practical sermons and other books breathing a religious spirit are bought and read, certainly indicates that the religious appetite is not appeased, however there may be weariness with scholastic treatises and jejune controversies. Even the works that are purely literary in their purpose cannot so surely provide for themselves a wide circulation and a permanent influence, as by directing through them the streams of the water of life — by reflecting from their pages a cordial, Christian experience. The work that sneers and scoffs at evangelical faith does itself damage beyond the power of mere genius to redeem.

Consider, too, the success that has attended efforts in recent days to reach, by the power of prayer and love, the drifting and degraded classes of society, especially in our large cities. Does not this signify that now, as when the Master himself was among us, there is large opportunity for Christian labor and large promise of success?

If we read the reports of our brethren on the foreign field, we shall find that, from almost every section of it, the word is, that the old systems of heathenism and superstition are shaking; that men are beginning to forsake their former faith; and thus the state of things that prevailed in Judea and throughout the Roman Empire, when Christ came, is partially reproduced. The invitation is held forth for the coming of a new and a true religion, that shall bring healing and peace and thrift and love and joy, to displace disease and strife and squalor and envy and wretchedness.

The harvest truly is plenteous, but *the laborers are few.* Every Christian should be a laborer; but if the fact corresponded with the duty, there would be, in the general comparison, a painful void between supply and demand, since they who profess the Christian name are still so small a fraction of the race. Alas! too few that profess to be followers of the

Saviour, follow him in the zealous prosecution of the work of doing good. Moreover, we do not mistake, I think, in referring to a special class the title which our Lord employs to designate the lack of service. He had himself been 'teaching and preaching in the synagogues,' as well as healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. It was the need of more associates in that work which oppressed him. Every religion has its order of professional teachers. So has Christianity, while charging upon every member of the church to labor, and regarding every true believer as 'a king and a priest unto God.' Pastors and teachers were ordained, by the divine Founder of Christianity, to preach the Word, to feed the flock of God, to give themselves wholly to sacred service. The ordinance has not been revoked. The necessity for the order of the ministry has not ceased. As soon will the state exist without officers of government, as the church without a ministry specially qualified and educated to instruct and comfort believers, and to lead the sacramental host to new conquests for their King. An army of officers would be inefficient and contemptible ; but so would an army without good officers be sure to lack discipline, and win few or no victories. It cannot be needful, here and now, to argue that the church and the world require a thoroughly educated class of religious teachers. Whether the education furnished in our Colleges and Seminaries is in all respects adequate, may be a question. If not adequate, let us by all means know how it can be improved ; but, meanwhile, we must have the best that is accessible. Ministers themselves, and churches, and men of the world, so far as they are interested in the subject, would be nearly unanimous in that demand.

If, then, by laborers we mean zealous, large-hearted and evangelical ministers, there is dearth indeed. The parish committee of a large and flourishing society, whose pulpit is vacant, may not think so, unless the *quality* of candidates be alone intended. In certain centres, that draw toward themselves a concourse of all trades and professions, it may not appear so. If vacant places and idle ministers could be somehow brought together, and be suited with each other, the chasm of want would be partially bridged ; but very partially, even then.

Here, in favored New England, the flocks are not few that faint and wander without a shepherd. Churches that long enjoyed a faithful ministry, cannot now find the unoccupied talent and piety to serve them fitly in the sacred office. And as we recede from this comparatively luminous centre, the torches of truth held aloft by steadfast hands, grow more sparse. My own work, for some years, was in the Western field; and at any time I could count around me there, station after station, village after village, church after church, unoccupied, and unable to find, near or far, the needed laborers. The supply for the work in other lands is so scanty as to be well nigh insignificant. It would be insignificant but for the power of truth and the grace of God, that often negative numbers, multiplying the five loaves to feed the three thousand, making one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. And after every allowance for these advantages, the lack of service is sad indeed.

To see a field of wheat when it stands, 'yellow, golden, glorious,' its surface like the washed sands of the shore, brushed by the wing of cloud-shadows, or swaying to and fro, or rolling, like billows, in the breeze, is pleasant and inspiring. Beauty is heightened by the anticipation of utility — by the thought, Here is bread for the hungry. But how melancholy to see the crop run to waste, its brightness tarnished by mold and rust, the tender stalks broken and trampled in the mire. In humanity's name, beg the proprietor not to allow this, by delaying too late the work of ingathering. Let the busy sickles or the ponderous reaper seize the opportune hour, and prepare the precious stores for the garner.

Angels, as they look down upon the field, which is the world, see many a harvest, immortal, perishing — souls and generations famishing without the bread of life. Gladly, we may believe, they would forsake their celestial home, to engage in work so arduous and yet so noble as is here to be done. But God has assigned this privilege and this duty to men, as his agents. It is ours, to whom have been committed the treasures celestial, to inquire how they shall be diffused far and wide. And if the responsibility presses upon us as it ought, we shall ask, 'Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?' He furnishes the answer:

"*Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.*" Every good gift cometh from the Father Almighty, with whom also the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous, availeth much. Since the Son, who knew perfectly what objects of prayer are acceptable in heaven, taught this petition, we know that, if offered in a right spirit, it will secure a gracious answer.

Grand and all-important as the object is, how gladly and how earnestly ought we to bring it before the Proprietor of the world and of the hearts of men. In what form he will send the answer, we may not dictate nor foresee ; a true faith will not demand to know. Perhaps that petition, breathed into the ear of Heaven, will be like the invisible vapor, that rises into the air, is condensed, and by friendly winds wafted till it reaches some dying germ, then falls; and that germ, refreshed and quickened, lives and grows to a great stature. Your humble, fervent prayer, wafted by the Spirit, may distill upon some distant soul, dying in sin, and may make that soul a benefactor unto many.

In the days of weakness and persecution to the primitive church, many and importunate must have been the prayers offered for deliverance and help. And when we see Saul of Tarsus stricken down by the light that blinded his eyes, but poured the morning of a new life upon his soul, it is not too much to believe that we witness the answer to prayer. There were souls before the Reformation that sighed under the yoke of bondage. God heard their cry, and raised up Luther as a deliverer. He knows where are other Sauls and other Luthers. Our prayers may discover them — the men whom the Master will honor as valiant defenders of the faith, and successful ambassadors pleading with thoughtless throngs, that they will repent and be reconciled to God.

But if we desire to put our petitions into definite form, we cannot err, I think, in praying, first, for the prevalence of piety in our Colleges and Schools; and secondly, for the conversion of the children and youth of our communities.

The custom of observing one day in the year, as a day of fasting and prayer for Colleges, rests upon reasons most substantial; and those reasons render a habitual mention of the object in our prayers most appropriate. Here are reservoirs of forces that are to move and mould the mind of society. In them, character receives an impulse never lost — a direction seldom reversed. Upon the degree to which genuine religion prevails during any four years of College history, depend many individual destinies, and a mass of influences, for good or for evil. If the degree and type of piety be low, many of the students that profess to be Christians will be won to other employments than that of preaching Christ. If a quickened and earnest spirit be present, no place affords better opportunity or brighter hope of conversions and accessions to the ministry of the Word. Estimate — to name a single example — the value of the change that occurred when Stoddard, the ambitious student, began the new life that led through the distant mountains and valleys of Persia, through arduous and successful labors, through precious scenes of grace, up to the shining city of our God. Consider the import of the change to him, and to the children of faith whom God gave him, and you may be stirred to pray that it may be repeated in numbers who, even now, are pursuing study with no purpose in the future, or with none but a selfish purpose.

And the like reasons apply with reference to prayer for the conversion of *all* our youth. Their own salvation is infinitely precious; but, besides, the Lord hath need of them. An educated ministry can come only from the ranks of youth; for those that are advanced beyond have already engaged in other pursuits, and their study days are over. Think of this, parents, concerning your children; teachers, concerning your classes. These souls represent you know not how many others. In them, see the cause of the Gospel at home and abroad represented. The greatest of Prophets and the greatest of Apostles, were once children, like these; perhaps your devotion may be crowned with the distinction of having furnished for the growing work, laborers inspired with the spirit of Prophets and Apostles.

I have already hinted, that sincere and consistent prayer for this object will be accompanied with correspondent action. For this is not a case where our own agency does not conspire with God's efficiency to produce the result which our prayers contemplate. Some, if they truly pray, will consecrate themselves to the labor; some, their children. And there is a third duty, that of encouraging and aiding such as are preparing, or are willing to prepare, for the work of preaching Christ.

Let it be granted that the world needs an educated ministry, and that this is a chief means which God has ordained to save those who believe. We come then to the fact, that education is not a gratuitous commodity. Professional instructors must be paid; books must be bought; and while time is devoted to the culture of the mind, the body must be fed and clothed. The most rigid economy cannot cypher so that the bill of expense for a collegiate and theological course shall not be several hundreds of dollars. Now, in strict justice, considering that every candidate for the ministry is an enlisted soldier of the church, ought not his rations—not to say his wages—to begin at once, and irrespective of his private ability to provide for himself? I could wish that it were so. Nay more, that the doors of learning should require no golden key to unlock them; but that they should be swung wide open, to welcome all comers. Would that knowledge might, by an enlightened munificence largely endowing schools of every grade, come to be a prize from which none need turn aside for lack of a fee to secure an entrance to the lists. Next to that would be a complete system of scholarships, making moral character and literary merit the title to pecuniary benefits ample for the demands of student life. If there is any more attractive investment for money than some such method for helping to arm and equip men who shall do valiant service in any and every honorable calling, I do not know where nor what it is.

But if these methods are ultimately to prevail, so as to exclude the necessity of any more partial provision, the time is not yet. Some noble men have inscribed their names, in golden and imperishable letters, upon professorships and departments and scholarships in our higher schools; but the list must be much extended before the problem of pecuniary ways and means will cease to confront the youth who longs for an education. Meanwhile, if any must be foiled in their attempt to solve the problem, should not the church see that her sons are exempted?

There is more danger that the bar of expense will prove a serious or fatal hinderance to candidates for the ministry than for others. The reasons are plain. In the first place, the great majority of those that enter, or set out for the ministry, are from the ranks of the poor. We need not discuss why it is so. The question of James has, perhaps, as much pertinence to that point as anything we could say: "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised them that love him?" If piety finds a more congenial home in the cottages of the poor than in the ranks of the rich, it is not strange that the church should receive her teachers and champions thence. Poverty, also, nurtures resolve and inures to endurance—qualities without which the ministry and the path to it are apt to seem appalling. Account for it as we may, the fact I suppose is settled, that few come with a full purse to the gate where the path to this profession begins. And besides, there is a difference between the prospective ability of the candidates for the ministry as compared with others. The examples of large salaries, in the sacred office, are few and far between. Happy the pastor who can contrive to make his means meet his current expenditures, without being required to pay debts incurred during his course of preparation.

Who shall tell us how many are, at this point, arrested and turned back from the career to which their hearts prompt them—'mute, inglorious Miltons' advocates for the truth, leaders for the people of God, who might have excelled those that have actually entered the service? How many of those that have wrought well, received, during their college or seminary course, the assistance of the Education Society? Let them rise up here, from among the living and the dead, and you should see numbers of the most honored and accomplished and useful servants of God and the church; men that ministered to your fathers—men that have ministered to you the comfort and light and salvation of the Gospel; men that have made a shining mark in the history of benevolent institutions; men that have given their lives and the fruit of their culture to redeem the heathen world from darkness and ruin. Look upon them, and say whether you wish the Education Society had not been, or whether you are and will henceforth be indifferent to its welfare.

To me, it has long been a wonder that this agency has not won and kept a higher place in the regards of Christ's people; that so few churches place it upon the list of their regular collections; and that it is so often left bankrupt, unable to meet drafts made upon it by creditors to whom the little quarterly sums which they are led to expect from this source are their salvation, so far as relates to their cheerful continuance in study.

Do we fear the effect of a state of dependence upon our young men? Pray, who of us all is *not* dependent? But whether we shall lose anything of moral dignity or manliness, by what we receive, rests much more with the givers than with ourselves. If every one who lends us help and favor, does so with a half-reluctant and condescending manner, we shall feel that we are paupers, and either submit at the expense of a proper pride, or spurn the help we nevertheless need. On the contrary, let a true generosity deal with us, let our benefactors assume that they, in their turn, are indebted, or will be indebted to us, and both giver and receiver are blessed. So I say, let us offer help to students for the ministry in no niggard spirit; not as if they were, strictly speaking, objects of our *charity;* not as if they were beneficiaries without being benefactors. Let us say, practically: Here is a little of what we owe you—so little that we leave you with the honor of carrying much more than your half of the load. Why not? according to the truth of the case.

There are young men in some of the churches, who have made, in mercantile life, from five thousand to twenty thousand dollars the past year. Is it just—not to say generous—to let their brethren, of equal ability to succeed in secular life, carry a crushing burden of care and debt and despondency, as the penalty for undertaking the work to which the wants of the church and the world summoned them? Let us have a nobler spirit in giving, and we shall have little occasion to fear lest the manly should refuse, or be made less manly, by consenting to receive.

It is not a *bounty* that is proposed to be paid; not a sum that would buy a substitute for seven or ten years' service in war, but the help that will just bridge over absolute need. In these days of high prices, one hundred dollars a year, with what may be earned in vacations and odd hours, will scarcely do more than that. It might not be best, if it were possible, to lift our students above the necessity of rigid economy, and of labor with their own hands. It surely *is* best that they be not driven out of school, or out of the ministry, nor be so harassed with the cares of this life that their minds shall lose freedom, nor be compelled to a mode of diet that will permanently impair health, nor become so involved in debt that they shall not be at liberty to choose any, even the least lucrative post of service, when they are through their preparation. So much the Education Society proposes to secure.

If it is said—I know it often is—that many who are aided by the Society are below the mark which should entitle them to help, I conceive that the plea is a poor one. Is the 'mark' on the scale of mental capacity and brilliancy? Let us grant that all these young men are not noticeable for natural or acquired talent. They may be very useful, nevertheless.

The late Dr. N. W. Taylor was wont to relate how, at one time, there was a member of the Seminary who seemed so dull and inapt that he felt compelled, out of kindness to him and regard for the churches, to advise him no longer to look toward the ministry as his calling, but betake himself to some plain, honest trade. The advice was neither resented nor followed. Soon after, the Professor heard that his unfortunate student had been preaching at a place where he himself had officiated. Meeting a member of that congregation, he asked, with a little latent amusement at the expected answer: "You had Mr. —— to preach for you last Sunday; how did you like him?" The parishioner did not recognize the person with whom he was speaking, and answered frankly: "We liked him well, and much better than we did Dr. Taylor!" "Since that," said the Doctor, "I have been very careful about passing adversely upon the qualifications of young men for the ministry, or predicting that they cannot find a people to be pleased and profited by them."

But admitting that some are disqualified, either in a mental or a moral point of view, 'What is the chaff to the wheat?'

Does the farmer decline to plant trees, because some will die and some be fruitless? Is there no such thing as tare and tret in the most successful trade? We shall not get a better class of soldiers, by discouraging the business of recruiting. We shall not load the ship, by insisting that none but good fishes shall get into the net. As a matter of fact, I do not doubt that the men assisted by this Society compare most favorably, both as regards mental and moral quality, with others in the same pursuit, but with independent means.

May the blessing of God abide upon an agency that has heretofore blessed so many, and its influence continue, in still larger degree, to be felt in multiplying the company of those that publish the Word, until there shall be no more need to say, Know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least to the greatest.

# THE FIELD OF CHRISTIAN LABOR.

A

# DISCOURSE,

*7532

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

# AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING IN BOSTON,

MAY 24, 1864.

BY REV. ELI THURSTON.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN & SON, 42 CONGRESS STREET.
1864.

From Pph. v. 389

69350

A. J. Coram

June 13, 1865

# DISCOURSE.

## LUKE X. 2.

THE HARVEST TRULY IS GREAT, AND THE LABORERS ARE FEW: PRAY YE THEREFORE THE LORD OF THE HARVEST, THAT HE WOULD SEND FORTH LABORERS INTO HIS HARVEST.

The field of Christian labor is the world. So Christ himself has declared. Like a vast field of grain, whitened by summer suns, and waving with golden fruit, it invites a multitude of reapers, and demands instant haste in securing it. And yet the laborers are few. Here and there, at wide intervals, are little clusters of spiritual reapers, toiling amidst numerous hindrances and disheartenings, while in every direction, as far as the eye can see, the immortal harvest is falling to the ground, and perishing for lack of help. That the harvest is truly great, therefore, and the laborers few, I shall not attempt to prove. The fact is too obvious to require it. No man, with the slightest acquaintance with the moral condition of the world, would have patience to listen to such an argument. If the statement in the text was true, when it fell from the Saviour's lips, and the field was comparatively limited; far broader, and more intense is its significance as applied to our times, when the entire world is open to the introduction of the gospel, the cry for help coming on every breeze to our ears, and "the harvest of the earth is ripe."

In view of such a state of things, the evident and practical question is, What is to be done? What does the word of God, and our duty to a perishing world require? Most obviously *something* is to be done. We are not to sit still, and let the world's harvest fail, without an effort. After the long summer of God's patience, and all the costly processes and influences which He has instituted and employed to mature, and make it ready for the sickle, we are not going to see it fall to the ground, and become fuel for the flames, or be blown away in the whirlwind of divine wrath, without moving a hand or lifting a prayer. We shall be recreant to the trust confided to us, if we do. God expects that the Church will see to it that the ranks of her ministry be kept full, notwithstanding the unavoidable waste by death, desertion and apostasy; and as she pushes forward her conquests, extends the lines of her operations, and new fields open for her occupancy, that she will keep the supply equal to the demand.

The duty of God's people in this respect, was most significantly foreshadowed in the divine directions to the Jewish church, to set apart an entire tribe to this holy service, and make permanent provision for its training and support. If this was required in *those times* of comparative inaction, when the church stood mainly on the defensive, and the day for aggressive movements had not come, how much more is it demanded, when the Captain of our salvation, with his sword upon his thigh, has taken the field and summoned his people to a general advance and assault upon the strongholds of the kingdom of darkness. If an army needs its full quota of officers while organizing and drilling in camp, how much more does it need them when it goes forth to battle! If the husbandman needs a full complement of laborers while the seed is being sown and the grain is growing and earing, how much greater his need when the fields are white and the harvest is come.

In reply, then, to the question, What is to be done,—we say most confidently and emphatically, *in general*, the laborers must be multiplied, till the supply fully equals the demand. This is a duty which God imposes upon the church. She is to produce ministers as the world needs them.

But by what means and methods, is this great result to be accomplished, and the whitened field to be filled with reapers? This is, by far, the more important, as well as difficult question of the two. It is *usually* easier to determine, in a given case, what needs to be done, than to point out the definite process of doing it. It has never been a difficult thing for loyal minds to decide what is to be done with this great rebellion, which has made the land stagger, the rivers flow with blood, and indeed the world tremble, as if shaken of an earthquake. *It is to be crushed.* There is no other alternative,—and *so* crushed, and ground to powder under the iron wheels of Mars, that no treason in earth or hell shall ever find a fragment of it out of which to construct another rebellion. But the *method* by which such a demolition could be effected, the combined wisdom and wealth of the land have been taxed to their utmost, for more than three long and weary years, to discover; and it is but just found out that Grant and grape, in unequal parts, can effect it.

So it is the easiest thing in the world to decide that the church must multiply reapers, till the immense field swarms, and is alive with them, but *not* so easy for some minds to determine the *method* by which it is to be accomplished.

I must think, however, that the Lord of the harvest has made the *process* as plain as the duty. The text itself *involves* all the instruction which is necessary upon the subject of means and methods. A single word in it, is a key to the whole secret. And taking that key in our hand, let us attempt to unlock the mystery, and ascertain what the church has to do in order to secure an adequate supply of reapers for the broad and whitened field.

1. It is to *pray.* "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." God hears and answers prayer, and never with more readiness and pleasure than when the petition has direct reference to the prosperity and enlargement of his kingdom. He is the Lord of the harvest. He planted and matured it, and his honor and glory are vitally concerned in securing and saving it. It is proper therefore, if the laborers need more aid in gathering the harvest, that they should go to their employer, lay the case in all its urgency before him, and ask him to furnish it. Before, and above all others, He is to be consulted. He best understands the necessities of the case, has the agencies and instrumentalities requisite at his control, and can increase the laborers to any extent he pleases. All hearts are in his hand, and there is not one so filled with infidelity and hate, that he cannot, by a word, drive out the unclean spirit, sweep and garnish it, form it into a

temple of the Holy Ghost, and kindle upon its altar a quenchless desire to preach Christ to a dying world. If he needs another Paul, he can lay his hand upon some mad zealot, tame him, and send him far hence to the Gentiles. If he wants a Newton, he can arrest some guilty trafficker in human flesh, fill his soul with sweet charities, and send him out on a mission of mercy. All power in heaven and earth is in his hands, and if we go to him with hearts burning with desire for his glory, and an eye single to the interests of his kingdom, we are sure of being heard and answered. His judgment may differ from ours, as to the *time* and *mode* of gathering the harvest, but indifferent to our request, he cannot be. It is scarcely possible therefore, to lay too much stress upon prayer. It takes hold of the arm that wields the destinies of the world. Is the harvest plenteous then, and the laborers few? *Pray* ye the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest. Make full proof of this divinely appointed instrumentality; have faith in it; and never cease till the heavens are opened and the answer comes.

But *prayer*, without effort, in all ordinary cases, is impotent. God works by means. For the accomplishment of his purposes among men, he employs human agencies. In *connection* with these, seldom divorced and apart from them, does he exert his power. The great object of prayer therefore, is, to secure the divine blessing upon human efforts—to render efficient what must otherwise be powerless. Hence prayer for *God's* working where man's effort is withheld, is prayer for a miracle—that is, prayer for a result which can be secured only through a departure from God's ordinary mode of working. Thus the husbandman obtains his crops by means of God's blessing upon his labor in fertilizing, tilling, sowing and protecting his fields, and prayer for a harvest in fields whereon he has bestowed no such labor, is prayer for a miracle. A threatened and perilled nation regains its wonted security and peace through strenuous and perhaps bloody struggles, and prayer for the re-establishment of its authority when no such efforts are employed, is prayer for a miracle. And so for the church to pray for an increase of spiritual reapers, the conversion of souls, or any other spiritual result, without using those means which God has appointed for securing such ends, is to pray that God would work a miracle to supply her lack of service. And to ask God to give us *by miracle*, what he has commanded us to obtain by effort, is both mocking and tempting him. So the Saviour represented it. The adversary counseled him to cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and trust in the divine promise to save him from harm; that is, to discard the ordinary and established means of self preservation, and rely upon the intervention of a miracle to secure him from destruction. To this infernal suggestion, Jesus replied, "Thou shalt not *tempt* the Lord thy God;" which evidently implies, that to trust in God to do by miracle, what he has promised to do only through the medium of human precautions and exertions, is tempting him. All such trust is presumption, and all such prayer is trifling with God.

And it is safe to assume, in addition to this, that God not only works by means, but ordinarily in *proportion* to the means employed. He does not usually work out complete and perfect results, through partial and inadequate agencies. "He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." A man who cultivates but one acre, cannot expect to gather the full harvest of ten, and to *pray* for such a harvest is to ask that God would supply by miracle his deficiency of service and outlay. A nation which calls into the field but ten thousand troops, cannot expect to meet and overcome a foe that cometh against it with twenty thousand, unless the advantages are pre-eminently in favor of the weaker force—and to *pray* for success against such fearful odds, is virtually to pray for a miracle. While in one sense it is unquestionably true, that the battle is not to the strong, in another and an important sense, the remark attributed to Napoleon the First, is equally true; that God is usually on the side of the heaviest battalions. Sometimes, with right and justice and Jehovah on the side of an inferior force, one may chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight; but ordinarily, the chasing is on the part of the strong and the many, and the flight on the part of the weak and the few. This is according to the ordinary and established principles of the divine administration, and to pray for the reverse of the rule, is praying for the interposition of miraculous power. God works *by* and *through* the subordinate agency of man. Where this is wise, vigorous and determined, he works mightily; where it is weak, faint, faltering and partial, he works feebly and brings imperfect results to pass.

By applying these familiar principles to the subject under consideration, it becomes evident that were the church to pray for an increase of laborers in the spiritual field without any *effort* to accomplish the object, she would be praying for miracles and tempting God. Her *conduct*, which has more tongues and louder voices than her prayers, would proceed upon the assumption that God is going to send down ministers from heaven, or raise them up, trained, furnished and qualified for their work, without the expenditures and courses of study ordinarily required to transfer men from the private ranks of the church to the watch-towers of Zion. But this we are happy to know is not true of the church at the present day. She is making some effort to secure the result for which she prays.

By the application of the same principles also, we infer that when the church *prays* that the great and whitened field may have an *adequate* supply of spiritual laborers, while her *efforts* are insufficient to keep her *present* supply good, and prevent the deficiency of ministers from becoming greater every year, she is chargeable with the guilty inconsistency of praying the Lord of the harvest to perform miracles to supply her lack of service. And this is precisely the attitude in which a reference to statistics, places the church in this country at the present time. In the closet, the temple, and wherever she lifts imploring hands to the throne, she devoutly *prays*, that God would send forth the heralds of salvation till their feet press every mountain, and their voices ring through every valley, and yet all her efforts hitherto do not prevent the deficiency of ministers from augmenting by hundreds every year in our own land. The increase of population, and the waste by death make a far heavier demand than all the schools of the prophets are able to supply. Instead therefore of a rapid *increase* of spiritual leaders, as the accelerating progress of God's kingdom demands, we have a gradual *decrease*. How is this alarming fact to be explained? "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" Has he shut up his ear and hand and heart against the prayer of his people? That is impossible. Let God be true, and every man a liar. Are we not driven, rather, to the mortifying conclusion that there is some radical *defect* in our prayers. Must we not turn back to the text and study more deeply the meaning of the Master when he puts before us prayer as the potent and only antidote for this deplorable scarcity of laborers. One of two things must evidently be true; either the direction is insufficient and fails to meet the exigency of the case, or we have failed to discover what is involved and irradicably inheres in his idea of prayer; and no intelligently devout mind will long hesitate as to the direction in which the mistake lies. Prayer implies works as well as words—efforts to help ourselves not less than petitions for God's help—a vigorous and untiring use of all legitimate means, in connection with an earnest and humble cry to heaven. And this brings us to remark,

2. That the prayer which the Saviour commands in the text, involves the parental consecration of sons to the work of the ministry. At their birth, pious parents are to hear God's voice saying to them, "Take these children and train them for the service of the church." They are to labor and pray for their early conversion. In the tender season of childhood the impression is to be written deeply and indelibly upon their minds, that they are not their own, but the Lord's; that the demand for ministers and missionaries is loud and urgent, and if they should be found endowed with the requisite gifts, that they are to hold themselves in readiness for the service of the sanctuary; that, in choosing a profession for life, they are not to confer with flesh and blood, not to select one which promises the greatest worldly gain, ease or honor, but one in which they can best serve God and their generation. By the inculcation of such views upon the sons of pious families—by reiterating and pressing them home till they become interwoven with all the child's ideas of future life and duty—the foundation is laid for a reasonable hope, that at no very distant day the great field will be filled with reapers. The family—"that school of indelible early impression"—must begin the work. It has it in

its power to plant convictions and aspirations in the minds and hearts of the sons of the church, which neither years nor the blandishments of the world can eradicate or suppress. A pious mother, long since in heaven, was accustomed to take her infant boy in her arms, and on the first day of each week, putting a penny into his tiny fingers, guide him in depositing it in a little box, which received the family offerings for the cause of Foreign Missions. As he grew up she frequently told him that she had consecrated him from his birth to the missionary service. In her closet, he would kneel by her side, and with her soft hand upon his little head, and her warm tears falling upon his flaxen hair, she would dedicate him over and over again to Christ as a future missionary to the heathen. When he was converted, though her prayers were ended and her tears done flowing, yet the memory of those early consecrations came back fresh and strong to his mind, and for twenty years, he has been a self-denying and successful missionary at the Sandwich Islands. And the sooner Israel is filled with such mothers, the sooner will the harvest be replenished with reapers. Here is an influence and a power which God has intrusted to the church, that has yet been but partially and feebly developed. The clerical profession has so few attractions, exacts so rigorous a service, commands so slight a compensation and involves so many trials and sacrifices, that many a Christian parent recoils at the thought of devoting his son to it. The path to fortune or fame is so much easier and more alluring, that whatever the prayer of his lips may be, the prayer of his heart is, that he may serve God in some other way, than in ministering at the altar. While he prays that his sons may bear the image of Christ, have his presence in death and be partakers of his glory in heaven; he prays, in the same breath, that they may not share in his earthly poverty, take part in his ministry, or have fellowship with his sufferings. Now how can such parents pray in sincerity, 'Lord, send forth laborers into thy harvest'? Whence, if not from the ranks of the church, are to come leaders for the sacramental host? Who are to educate their sons for this work, if not those who have voluntarily taken them to the house of the Lord, and by a public consecration devoted them to any service which the word and providence of

God might require? Are we to look to strangers and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, to replenish and perpetuate the priesthood of Israel? Does not God reply in a voice of thunder to all such prayer for the increase of reapers, Ye have the material of this needed supply already in your own families. I have placed them in your own hands to be moulded and trained and anointed for the sacred office, and if they are hindered and held back, and retained as hewers of wood and drawers of water, wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak thou unto the *children of Israel*, that *they* go forward with this work.

But the education of the sons of the church for the ministry requires *treasure*, not less than self-denial and prayer, and many Christian families are unable to meet the expense of it. So that were those who have the means, to comply with the requisition, still the demand would be unsupplied. And the question returns, How is the deficiency to be met? Is it to be supposed that the poorer classes in the church are to be excluded from the ministerial office? If it involves a *burden*, are they to be excused from bearing their share of it? If a *privilege*, are they to be cut off from a participation in its benefits? Has Christ thus legislated against poverty and in favor of wealth? Has he, who was himself so poor that he had not where to lay his head—he, who hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom—he, who selected a few poor and obscure men as his immediate disciples, and uniformly mingled with persons of this class in all his earthly sojourn, and though rich, yet became poor that we might be rich, that is, saved the world by poverty, has he, by a reversal of the primitive law of his kingdom, now excluded a very large, not to say the greater part of his disciples, from the most important sphere of Christian labor, on account of their poverty? The thing is incredible—morally impossible. And therefore we are driven to the conclusion,

3. That the prayer in the text involves the obligation, on the part of the church, to institute and pursue some feasible method for the training of her indigent sons who have been called of God to take part in this ministry. And the ripest wisdom and piety of the church, together with the experience of centuries,

have decided that organizations of a character kindred to that whose anniversary we celebrate to-day, present the most feasible and auspicious method which has yet been discovered. The simple object of such associations is to aid pious indigent students in the course of thorough training for the ministry to such an extent, that in conjunction with the most rigid economy and strenuous efforts on their part, they shall be enabled to struggle through their preparatory course. The plan is simple, the object contemplated a noble one, and the necessity of prosecuting it, with vigor and perseverance, is obvious from the fact that the harvest is great, and the laborers, few—a necessity which has existed from the Saviour's day to ours. And it is difficult to understand how Christians, or churches, who, with the means at their disposal, refuse to sustain this cause and keep its treasury replenished, can intelligently and heartily offer the prayer in the text. With my understanding of the case, the husbandman might as well pray for a harvest, while he neglects to sow and till his fields: a government as well expect its army to be supplied with competent officers, while it employs no efforts to educate and qualify them for the service.

And with the fact of a rapidly extending field unsupplied with spiritual laborers staring us in the face, and the cry for help coming up on every breeze, it is utterly unaccountable to my mind, that this subject excites no deeper and no wider interest. It is a matter of astonishment, apprehension and grief, that so few of the churches, even in enlightened New England, contribute regularly to the support of this cause. By consulting the annual Reports of this Society for the last three years, you will find that, on an average, only about one-fifth of the churches in the good old Bay State, make any contributions in its behalf. And in the other New England States the deficiency is greater still. And another discouraging feature in this strange picture is, that for these three years, the income from stated collections, is on a regularly *decreasing* scale. In 1861, out of 493 churches in Massachusetts, only 114 sent it aid. In 1862, only 103; and in 1863, only 83. The contributing churches gave in 1861, nearly $9,500; in 1862, less than $9,000; and in 1863, $5,319. Thus in three years its receipts by collections from the churches, lack but $569 of falling off one half. And but for the increase from the income of funds and legacies, the prospect would be gloomy indeed. Now how long, let me ask, at this rate, before the field will be supplied with reapers, the hills and valleys echo to their glad harvest-song, the wilderness bud and blossom as the rose, and the year of jubilee return? Not until you and I and our children, and our children's children have turned to dust, and generation on generation of the unevangelized and benighted have gone down to a hopeless eternity. The prospect from this point of observation is any thing but encouraging.

And then, at the present time, there are signs in the moral heavens—prophetic indications in the rapid progress of events, that render it peculiarly unfortunate that such a cause as this should falter. The probabilities are thickening and maturing every day, as the struggle in this country lingers and lengthens its crimson trail over the land, that the southern portion of our heritage is to be swept with the besom of destruction, till its former institutions are demolished, and its former arrogant possessors are overrun, trodden down and exterminated. It looks more and more, as if their proud threat, either to conquer or die in the struggle, was sooner or later to be terribly executed. And if that threat be executed, there must come speedily and inevitably not only a social and civil reconstruction, but an ecclesiastical and religious reconstruction. Out of the wreck, it is going to be as impossible to save *spiritual* leaders, as political. The testimony from the beginning has been that no class of men at the South have been more determined, open-mouthed and virulent in their hostility to the Government than the clergy, and their churches, to a lamentable extent, they have carried with them. Those churches and their ministers are to be swept away, as by a whirlwind, with their boasted Confederacy. And after the storm has passed, and the skies are cleared, there is coming such a demand upon the churches of the North, for spiritual leaders, as they never heard before; perhaps will never hear again. And it will come up from every part of the broad field simultaneously. It will demand haste and an instant supply. Some of our sister denominations, quicker and keener in foresight than we, are anticipating the coming event, already taking possession of the ground in conquered districts, reorganizing the churches upon a loyal basis, putting loyal watchmen upon their walls, and so preparing themselves for approaching emergencies. Where shall *we* stand when the day of doom to slave-holding churches has come, and a knell is rung in all their towers and spires, and a demand is made upon us for a loyal ministry? An educated and competent priesthood is not the growth of a day or a year. It takes a decade of years to bring it to maturity, and while we are getting ready, others will come in, and gather the harvest. I repeat it, with emphasis and warning, it is *peculiarly an unfortunate time*, to let the cause of clerical education flag. For the last fifty years we could not have selected one more so.

It ought here to be distinctly understood, that when the storm, now raging, has passed by, and the time for organizing a new and better order of things at the South has arrived, that field, like the virgin fields in the West, will not long lie unoccupied by reapers of some sort. If Christians are not prepared to enter in, and begin the work, the enemy will be. If Protestants lack the men, already trained and anointed for the service, to send down and take possession, the Papacy will find them in numbers sufficient to supply every city and village and acre. *We* may stop the flow of treasure, consecrate our sons to material pursuits, deplete our educational processes both of men and means, and be found, in the time of need, destitute of messengers whom we can send; but we need calculate on no such deficiency and failure on the part of the Church of Rome. Neither the history of the past, nor the experience of the present justify any such expectation. This stupendous system of ignorance, superstition and error, is silently yet successfully at work in every part even of the enlightened North; every year making stealthy advances, gaining possession of fairer and fairer districts of our cities, purchasing and dedicating to the worship of Mary and the saints, the temples we consecrated to Christ; erecting new ones of granite to endure the waste of ages, while we build with shingles to be blown away by the winds, or be consumed by the flames; holding, as by hands of steel, their votaries to their old faith, and making them proof against all the influences of education and the appliances of the gospel; while our children of the covenant are easily loosed from their moorings, and found surging and drifting and tossed about by every wind of doctrine and wave of passion.

These things, and a long catalogue of others, of a kindred nature, which I need not enumerate, we find true in the North, on *this* side of the present field of strife. And then lying on the opposite side of it, is a vast territory vexed and distracted by civil commotions and revolutions, where the Church of Rome has taken possession, planted her standard, and holds almost undisturbed control; and is it to be supposed that a power as grasping, adroit and far-seeing as that of the Papacy, will not put forth a desperate effort, at the proper moment, *to gain the intermediate region*, and make the line of its hierarchal influence and possessions entire from the northern to the southern extremity of the continent? I know that by such a suggestion, a man renders himself liable to the charge of being an alarmist. We are sleeping and dreaming at present over our perils from this source, as we have been the last fifty years over those from slavery; lulling ourselves to deeper repose by precisely the same fallacious arguments—trusting to education, free inquiry, and the general progress of truth to arrest error, overcome intolerance, purify the moral atmosphere, and bring in a brighter day. But we slept too long, as we now find to our cost, over the dangers which threatened us from a domestic *political* despotism, and it is by no means certain, that we may not awake too late to find that we have slept too long and soundly over the perils which threaten us from a foreign *ecclesiastical* despotism. No man would hazard much by the prediction that the next war that startles this country and reddens its soil will be waged between Protestantism and Popery, and it would not be strange if it followed closer upon the heels of this, than this followed the war of 1812.

But whether all this shall prove true or not, on one thing we can most confidently calculate, that if, in any sudden emergency, South or elsewhere, *we* are found deficient in men to lead the sacramental host of God's elect on to conquest and possession, the Papal powers will find them in sufficient numbers to lead the hordes of the man of sin, to any part of the field where there is a square acre to be added to his dominion. We may relax our efforts, and doze and dream over this work of raising up ministers of our God; but the Papacy will never tire, nor want for treasure to educate a priesthood for the devil, till her supply fully equals every demand.

And with such signs in the heavens and such voices in the air, and all through the earth, announcing that the harvest of the world is becoming ripe, it is difficult to see how we are going to answer it to Christ, to the church, or even to ourselves, that we are no more alive to this work. Is it possible that the people of God or any portion of them, have fallen back upon old stereotyped objections and cavils against the Education Society, which were thoroughly answered and exploded years ago? Are there any who deny that there is any such scarcity of ministers and demand for an increase of their number, as we assume? Because there may sometimes appear to be a surplus in New England, swarming and lighting around every vacant pulpit, like bees around a hive, is it therefore inferred that the supply is greater than the demand?

As has been said a hundred times, the *fact*, which is admitted, does not warrant the inference. With equal propriety it might be inferred that because there is a surplus of Tracts and Bibles in New England, subserving no purpose except to gather dust and cumber the shelves of many a bookstore, that therefore there is no need of Tract and Bible Societies to publish more—or because we have a liberal supply of school-houses, school-teachers, school-books, academies, colleges, and theological seminaries in New England, that therefore there is no destitution of educational facilities in the West, South or anywhere else—or, because there are waving harvests and fullness of bread in New England, therefore there is no cleanness of teeth, squalid poverty, and actual starvation in any other portions of the globe. Such reasoning, by proving altogether too much, proves nothing, and the marvel is that any intelligent Christian should ever have recourse to such a subterfuge.

But, it used to be said, and I do not know but it is thought, if not said now, by way of objection to the Education Society, that it has had the misfortune to bring into the ministry too many men of inferior talents and qualifications. A careful examination of the list of the names of those whose trembling steps to the watch-towers of Zion were steadied and aided by its funds, would take this objection out of every mouth. If the lights which this organization has kindled, and which are shining to-day upon the darkness of heathenism in far off lands, in the islands of the sea, in the rising cities and villages of the West, in the most important churches nearer home, in our halls of learning and schools of the prophets all over the land, and in almost every position where genius and culture are demanded; I say were these lights to be at once extinguished, it would strike with amazement these objectors, cover the daughter of Zion with a cloud, and send a wail of lamentation and woe through the church. And supposing, as the objection assumes, that among the ten thousand laborers which this agency has raised up and sent into the field, there are many of moderate talents and attainments, is it any thing unusual and strange? Does not the same thing happen in the legal and medical professions? How many lawyers and physicians are there in the country whose chief and only distinction consists in the diplomas they have received and the titles they wear? How many men are educated for *commercial* life, who fail in their calling? Something like nine, I think, out of every ten. The land swarms with bankrupt merchants. How many are trained for mechanics, farmers and every other pursuit, who never attain to the least superiority, and are the merest servants of the few who rise and shine in their profession? The world is made up of men of ordinary parts, and neither this Society nor any thing else can transform them into geniuses. There is but one glory of the sun, but one glory of the moon, but ten thousand lesser and feebler glories of the stars. There are a thousand blossoms every spring that blight and fall and come to no fruit—a thousand flowers that bloom unseen and waste their sweetness on the desert air.

A similar phenomenon is discernable in the kingdom of grace. How many men are hopefully converted and gathered into the church, who seem to add little or nothing to its moral beauty and power. They count more around the communion table, than out in the vineyard. God seems to convert *hundreds*, for the sake of getting a half a score of burning and shining lights. And with such facts before our eyes, can this Society be condemned, because every man it aids is not a Paul, a Luther, an Edwards or a Beecher? Is it not enough to find upon its books the names of one hundred and eighty of our Foreign missionaries and a larger number still of our Home missionaries, and to learn in addition that many of the brightest lights in our colleges, theological seminaries, and the pulpits of our cities were kindled at the altar of this Society?

I did not intend however to enter upon this line of remark—nor shall I pursue it farther. It cannot be necessary. Every objection to the cause, like those now glanced at, fails and falls when brought to the bar of impartial criticism, and the cause stands entitled to the warmest sympathy and a more hearty co-operation of all the pastors and members of our churches.